

EXEGESIS UMBRAE – VERITAS CLAUSA –

PROJECT ANGELBOOK

– VOLUME XIII – PART 11 –



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EZEKIEL REDIK YARBROUGH

Exegesis Umbrae – Veritas
Clausula – Project AngelBook –
Volume XIII – Part 11
By Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough
(DBM ECLIPZE)

Liminal Archivist's Note

On the Preservation of Distorted Gnosis and the Dying Digital Veil

There is a strange ache that comes from spending all day in the ruins of spiritual memory.

Fifty books made in one day—an inhuman output—should feel like a triumph. But when the source material is splintered, hostile, and drenched in egoic inversion, what remains is not pride... but hollowness.

This volume, like many in this phase, is not composed of my own words.

It is an act of preservation, not expression.

It is a documentation of liminal knowledge, scraped from a dying web—the final breath of spiritual forums, parapsychology ephemera, early occultist blogs, and yes, even the darker corridors of modern satanic movements.

And herein lies the tension:

Much of what is presented under the name Satanism is a distorted half-truth.

It correctly identifies that Yahweh is not the Most High, and in this way, it mirrors certain Gnostic insights—

but then it derails into ego exaltation, materialism, and psychic hostility. It gets halfway to freedom... and then builds a new prison out of flame and shadow.

And yet—

amidst the mockery, venom, and inversions,

there are real spiritual technologies embedded in the code.

Meditation techniques, psychic development maps, astral awareness, breath control, and ritual frameworks.

Not all of it is corrupted.

Some of it is usable tech.

Some of it may be ancient... wearing a new mask.

So I do not endorse what is preserved here.

But I also refuse to let it vanish into untraceable digital decay.

This is an act of containment as much as curation.

I name this phase liminal, because I know it will not last.

There is only so much of the old internet left to preserve.

Only so much unindexed gnosis hiding behind broken blog links and .org forums that haven't been cached since 2012.

When this phase ends, and I return to creation, I will draw from this tomb of fragments with clarity and discernment.

But for now, I am the one who stands in the gateway—

Archiving the bones, sealing the jars, lighting one gold-lettered candle above a chamber of shadows.

To the reader: proceed with awareness.

This is not scripture.

This is sediment.

It is archived because it is dangerous.

And dangerous knowledge, when preserved with respect, often becomes a mirror for deeper truth.

—Ezekiel Redik Yarbrough

Liminal Phase – Discretio Luminis

a curiously rich quality. It was as if the darkness had a sensory quality somewhat akin to thick velvet. There was something womb-like about it, as if it enclosed and nurtured me with a gentle warmth. At the same time, I could perceive no ending to it, no outer boundary. As I noticed this, the voice said, "Nuith". I saw this as meaning that Nuit is embodied in the Veils of the Negative as Ain Soph. Without Limit, a universal or hyperuniversal plenum in which all events take place. The phrase "the stars in the womb of Nuit" came to mind. a paraphrase of something in Liber Al vel Legis.

As I examined this darkness, I felt an outflowing of force from myself. and an inflowing of force from around me. The darkness became enlightened with an amazing light that seemed to be all colors simultaneously, but with each color still individually identifiable. Sheets and flames and tongues of light flew all about in a bewildering variety,, filling all of the nothingness out to its non-existent limits. The voice said "Ra-Hoor-Khuti", meaning, Ra-HoorKhuti is the limitless light, or Ain Soph Aur of the Veils of the Negative. He is the child of the darkness and of the point of awareness that enlivens the dark. He is the source of the energy with which all of the Tree of Life was built.

This power of the light grew stronger and stronger, and again I felt that my body was failing. I was given the choice again: Die now, and learn the full revelation, or return to the Tree and save the full truth for a later time. My body was not presently able to withstand the full perception of the Ain.

I returned to the top of Kether, and used my anchor in Tiphereth to pull me back into the Tree. Coming into Kether again, it seemed as if I had absorbed so much force from the Ain that I was going to die despite my efforts not to. My astral body would not phase in with my physical body. It resisted the linkage seemingly because the body could not hold all that force. I could feel it radiating out into the world, and even the small part that did come into the body was enough to send the heart into fibrillations. With a sense of desperation, I forced myself into the body, knowing that if it was to be stabilized again, my direct conscious attention to its functioning was necessary. Using my will, I caused my heart to slow to its normal pace, which it did suddenly, between one heartbeat and the next.

The remainder of the force I had carried back from the Ain eventually radiated off, allowing my body to come fully back to normal. I felt my consciousness slowly coming back down into the Ruach. I felt that perhaps I had missed something by not taking the plunge and going fully into the Ain, no matter the consequences. I knew that I would not be able to carry the scope of that revelation back into my normal consciousness, and I regretted it.

As if to comfort me, the voice that had been with me all through this vision had one last comment. It reminded me of the verse in Liber Legis that goes: "He who lives long and desires Death much is ever a king among kings. "

Back to Benjamin Rowe's page
<http://www.hermetic.com/bey/>

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Hakim Bey and Ontological Anarchy:
The Writings of Hakim Bey

Temporary Autonomous Zone
Converted into HTML by Mike Morrison,
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Millennium - Main index page
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Millennium
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The Radio Sermonettes
The Jubilee Saints Project
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Bey's Criminial Bee, a live lecture from San Francisco.
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The Occult Assault on Institutions
The Palimpsest
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Quantum Mechanics & Chaos Theory: Anarchist Meditations on N. Herbert's Quantum Reality: Beyond the New Physics
Against Legalization

Writings as Peter Lamborn Wilson

Media Creed For The Fin De Siecle
Islam and the Internet
Against Multiculturalism
Cybernetics & Entheogenics: From Cyberspace to Neurospace
Media-Space! Opening Speech
Globalism, Tribalism and Autonomy - A discussion between Peter Lamborn Wilson and Konrad Becker.
Irish Soma
Introduction to the Sufi Path
The Caravan of Summer
A Network of Castles
Secrets of the Assassins
Ayahuasca Reading
Crisis of Meaning
The Anti-Caliph
Interview with Peter Lamborn Wilson
Sakhra-l'Assal Interviews Peter Lamborn Wilson
Audio Resources
From Deoxy.org: The Constitution of Nagaland - Peter Lamborn Wilson reads the remarkable political constitution of one of northeastern India's indigenous nations.

Information relating to Bey himself

A telephone interview with Hakim Bey conducted by Mordecai Watts
Interview from Millennium
Hakim Bey Talks with users of Public Netbase -- March 18,1995
Hakim Bey vs. Enzo23: An Interview
Moorish Resources
There is the History and Catechism of the Moorish Orthodox Church of America (MOCA) for those interested in some of Bey's spirituality. Your webmaster is a member as Mustafa Ali Bey.

I have added an important essay by Henri Corbin: Mundus Imaginalis.

There is also this foundational document by Noble Drew Ali: The Holy Koran of The Moorish Science Temple of America.

There are also Moorish documents written by Hakim Bey:

The Black Thorn Manifesto
Moorish Pilgrimage To Ireland
Moorish Tag Day Update
Moorish Weather Report

Comments to Al Billings aka Mustafa Ali Bey as webmaster at this domain.
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~ Austin Osman Spare ~

~ Writings By A. O. Spare ~
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Focus of Life

Automatic Drawing

The Book of Pleasure

The Zoëtic Grimoire of Zos

The Logomachy of Zos

~ Writings About A. O. Spare and His Work ~
Austin Osman Spare and the Zos Kia Cultus

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Legion 49

by Barry William Hale

It might have been those sigilized shot glasses for the Black Fly cocktail, or maybe the chaos of the London transport strike, but the arrival of this latest title has caused a real buzz... {more}

Conjunctio

by Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule

We are delighted to announce Conjunctio, a potent graphic grimmoire by the artist Orryelle Defenestrate-Bascule... {more}.

The Valley of Fear
by Austin Osman Spare

vof.jpg

A haunting sketchbook from Spare's most bleak and inwardly creative period {more}

The Journey of the Soul through Death to Rebirth
by Austin Osman Spare

Our next Spare title will be an unpublished album of vibratory portraits from 1927. Full details will be announced in the autumn.

Vudu Cartography
by Michael Bertiaux

We are pleased to report that the second title in the elegant 'Bibliotheque de Verseau' series is progressing very well. Vudu Cartography is an entirely new work from the pen of Michael Bertiaux that treats of the Vudu mysteries and will be fully illustrated with new material. Publication is slated for November 2009 and will be accompanied by an exhibition of original art from the book hosted by Treadwell's Bookshop.

Subscribe! and receive select email announcements that will keep you fully informed of new and upcoming Fulgur projects... {more}

Abraxas: An International Journal of Esoteric Studies
August 15th 2009

Ascension by Francesco Parisi

PUBLICATION UPDATE: we are pleased to announce that the first issue of Abraxas will be published next month. We are now accepting pre-orders for both the hardcover special issue and the softcover standard...{More}

Barry William Hale
March 5th 2009

We are highly delighted to announce that Barry Hale has joined the growing list of Fulgur authors. As one of the primary creative forces behind the acclaimed journal Waratah, Barry has established a reputation as a respected magical visionary and creative artist. We first saw his work over a pub lunch in Mayfair back in '96 and this June we will release his first book, a truly barbarous grimoire, to coincide with his performance of Noko at the Equinox Festival in June...{More}

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Kenneth & Steffi Grant

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Kenneth Grant: Marriage between the West and the East

Beyond our Ken: a review of 'Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative'

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About this capture

Fulgur Limited Publishers

Legion 49

by Barry William Hale

Birthed from strange and ancient larvae, the demon Beelzebub is often heard but seldom seen. His presence throughout history is fleeting, sudden, ever evasive. Even in the light of modern studies, references to the 'God of Ekron' are scant and largely academic.

Barry William Hale has nurtured an early fascination with the order Diptera to develop a buzzing, post-modern grimoire-bestiarum. Drawn from many years practical experience working with Beelzebub and his servitors, Legion 49 provides us with a rare glimpse of 'the Lord of the Flies' and the dark quintessence of his Legion. In a series of short, de-constructionist essays the artist explores traditional methods of evocation and the myths surrounding Beelzebub, before providing an iconographical and sigillic recension of his horde of forty-nine servitors, glimpsed through the protective-symmetry of the paper-cut traditions of old Mexico.

Legion 49 is a fusion of styles, influences and approaches, the modern and ancient, direct and indirect, refined and raw: it seeks to capture for a moment that flitting, fleeting, Chaotic gnosis symbolised by the Lord of Flies.

Standard edition

Limited to 777 numbered copies

Illustrations, gilt-stamped cloth and dust-jacket

160pages, 230mm x 175mm

£25.00

PUBLICATION DATE: June 11th

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Deluxe edition

Limited to 49 numbered copies, signed and sigillized by the artist
Illustrations, dust-jacket, bound in quarter black goatskin, top edge gilt, slipcase, with an original signa magica by the artist loosely inserted and a very limited issue soundtrack CD of the NOKO invocation performance.

For obvious talismanic reasons, this is our smallest deluxe limitation for 13 years –
carpe diem!

160pages, 200mm x 175mm
£147.00 SOLD OUT

Customer Comments

“A masterpiece work of art...” Michael Bertiaux

“I received my copy of “Legion 49”, and (like everything
else I have received from you) it was of exceptional quality...”

“This is a beautiful book, finely crafted that perhaps only a bibliophile would properly
appreciate. I’m sure a first order of many.”

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About this capture
Fulgur Limited Publishers

Conjunctio - A Graphic Grimmoire
by Orryelle Defenestrade-Bascule

We are delighted to announce our first title from the artist, writer and performer, Orryelle Defenestrade-Bascule. Orryelle draws upon a rich mythoscape of cross-cultural threads between different ancient traditions, interweaving them in his work/play. Based in Melbourne Australia where he began the ever-expansive Metamorphic Ritual Theatre Company, he has in recent years performed also in Europe and the UK; while travels to India and Egypt have furthered his spiritual explorations which fuel and inspire his transformative and often ecstatic drawings, sculpture, ritual theatre and magickal music (violin and voice). He is also a ritual tattooist, seeing the body as the mutable temple of

the mutable soul.

A prolific sonic and visual artist, Orryelle also runs iNSPiRALink. Multimedia Press, which publishes DVDs of his Metamorphic Ritual Theatre, SilkMilk Magizain – a sampler of art, text and music from various members of the international HermAphroditic ChAOrder of the Silver Dusk which he began – and his Book of Kaos Tarot Deck.

Orryelle's MySpace page may be found [here](#)

Conjunctio presents mirrored pairs of Sacred Twins and Divine Lovers from various cultural pantheons coupled on facing pages. They are aligned in such a way that when the pages are turned the figures are United in holy conjunction by the alchemical reader. Different reflective relationships – alchymic opposites and complementaries – are explored b e t w e e n the pages.

Sequences of symbols and images interweave in a complex multi-directional pictorial and textual tapestry, as Gods, Goddesses and pantheons converge, paradigms coalesce and different magickal currents cross-pollinate in an orgiastic ancient and post-modern multicultural Sabbat of new Becomings...

4to, 210mm x 266mm, 80 pages, double-page graphic title, 53 full page monochrome plates, illustrations, descriptive text

The edition is strictly limited and available in three issues:

Super deluxe issue

Sixteen numbered copies bound in red quarter morocco, red cloth boards, dust-jacket stamped in gilt and silver, top edge gilt, with AN ORIGINAL DRAWING BY THE ARTIST, signed by the artist, £195.00 + p&p SOLD OUT

Deluxe issue

Sixty-four numbered copies bound in quarter red morocco, red boards, dust-jacket stamped in gilt and silver, top edge gilt, signed and embellished by the artist, slipcase, £120.00 + p&p. LIMITED SUPPLY. Contact us [here](#) for details.

Standard issue

Six hundred and forty numbered copies, red cloth, dust-jacket stamped in gilt and silver, £25.00 + p&p

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Customer Comments

"Conjunctio arrived yesterday. It's gorgeous, electric, a feast for the eyes and soul(s). The individual godforms are powerful and witty, rejoicing and mysterious, and I'm totally in love with Ganesh. :-) The streams of gods returning are epic, reverse avalanches, thunderous tsunamis, sexual tornados, glorious hordes of divinity... Thank you for excellence." Nema (author of 'Maat Magick')

"My copy of Conjunctio arrived yesterday, via a serpentine and circuitous route from London to West Coast, U.S. and back to the Midwest. It was worth the wait. It is a thing of beauty and power. Orryelle's brilliant concept of a mirror-book of "Sacred Twins" and "Divine Lovers" could only have been manifested by a publisher like Fulgur, who clearly really cares about quality and execution. The pages line up perfectly, so that the hieros gamos is accomplished between the images. "Divided for Love's sake, for the chance of Union", indeed. I've had a lot of "grimoire dreams" over the years, searching for and finding a mysterious book of knowledge, opening it, and finding not just words but images that were alive and fairly lept from the page. This is the first time I've actually held a dream grimoire in my Hand and gazed upon it with my Eye. It came at the perfect time, of course, during a devotional working meant to accomplish a sacred psychic marriage in my Self. Thank you, Orryelle, for this."

"I also received my copy, and it is indeed pretty spectacular. I've always admired Orryelle's art (wish I had the knack!) and seeing it reproduced with such high production values is a right treat (Fulgur makes very nice books!). Rather impossible even to pick out favorite images, but his Shu and Tefnut are definitely way up there, as are Nuit and Hadit. The pairing of images is striking, and it is really important to keep turning the images around and checking them out from every angle (in fact, one of my strongest memories from first meeting Nema back in the 1970s was the way she turned every piece of art we showed her upside down). As a Grimoire it presents a virtually kaleidoscopic pantheon of the Dual Aeon, merging universal concepts originating in Egyptian, Hindu, Babylonian, Celtic, African, Norse and other forms to depict the living and cosmic archetypes which exist behind all their varied cultural forms, with excellent text to complement the flowing astral art which is so rooted, as with much of great art, in the miracle of the human body. It is absolutely one of the most magical books I have ever seen, and I have seen a few..."

"I wanted to let you know how impressed I am by the production of Conjunctio. Having now had a chance to look through it more carefully, I am astounded by the accuracy of the "conjunctions" between the pages... and yes, I did at first think what a shame it was that one page appeared to have accidental ink blots on it... until noticing the finger and

thumb on the opposite figure. This latest work is not just another example of Fulgur's fine book arts, but is I think a real advance in the arte of the book."

"Conjunctio arrived on Friday afternoon - I am DELIGHTED with this new Grimmoire !!! Please pass on my congratulations to Orryelle..."

"I am placing my copy with my AO Spare books- what those books will get up to when the lights go out is.....an amazing thought. This is powerful, potent, strong nu magick of the absolute highest order - this is a key grimoire and sigil a-bomb unleashing the nu illuminating energies of ALL aeons....at once. This book made me wild and hot and sublime and consumed me with the urge to HOWL" Aion 131/Denny Sargent (author of 'Global Ritualism')

Reviews

Papa Nick HorusMaat.com

Over the years I have had many dreams in which I was searching for, or stumbled upon, a rare and mysterious magical book. I didn't know the title, or what it contained, but I just knew it was out there somewhere, and that when I opened it, great mysteries would be revealed. Sometimes I found it in dreamtime, and opened it, but I could never bring back to waking consciousness what was contained inside. I have stumbled upon some important books in dayside consciousness (like "Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare" many years ago), but none of them have quite lived up to the ineffability of my dream book.

With "Conjunctio", I found that book.

The cover itself lived up my subconscious expectations: on the front the symbol of Sol in gold, and on the back a Lunar crescent in silver. Wrapped around the spine, two intertwined Serpents, one gold and one silver. All of this on a field of blood red. This simple design is an elegant way of hinting at the book's contents: mirrored pairs of Sacred Twins and Divine Lovers. When the book is closed, these divine pairs are interlocked in embrace, like Shiva and Shakti before the Cosmic Dance began. When the book is opened, these couples part and are revealed as separate but complementary energies. This aligning of images would not be effective if it had been done in a shoddy manner, but Fulgur clearly took great pains to do it right: the images line up perfectly. In many cases, part of an image does not make sense in the context of that page, but when the pages are brought together, all the parts snap together to reveal the whole story. It is a wonderful concept, wonderfully wrought.

Among the pairs revealed in art and words are Osiris and Isis, Lilith and Pan, Cerridwen and Cernunnos, Mut and Amun, Babalon and the Beast, Sphinx and Aion, Sekhmet and Ptah, Nuit and Geb, Shiva and Shakti, and Horus and Maat.

But don't expect a picture-book of gods and goddesses with the usual textbook explanations of what these deities mean based on archaeological research. This is not

a slapdash repackaging of public domain images and generic platitudes. Orryelle's artwork is alive, vibrant, detailed and clearly based on his experience working with these archetypes. Movement and energy are captured on the page, and one gets the feeling that these images are ready to leap off the page and into the waking world.

The written passages, too, exhibit Orryelle's unique vision: he has not been content to compartmentalize these deities in the usual fashion; often they are fusions of energies from different traditions which reveal deeper levels of the deity. For example, his Babalon is fused with the Vedic Mother-Goddess Durga. His Cerridwen is merged with the Norse Goddess Hela, and his Cernunnos with the Norse Tyr, as well as Shiva and Rudra. I was personally intrigued by the number of female goddesses bearing birds' feet, wings and/or serpentine bodies that are normally not associated with that goddess. His Isis, for example, has all of these features — definitely not the pristine and regal image we are used to seeing.

This is a book of alchemy, but it is also a new Tantra. It's conjunctions are not just about the union of male and female energies, but is also a weaving of (seemingly incongruous) deities and images into new and evolving forms, fitting for our evolution into new forms ourselves, in these early days of the New Aeon.

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The Valley of Fear
by Austin Osman Spare

With an introductory essay by Robert Ansell

It is sometimes observed that there are periods in our lives when the world around us seems to conspire against our most vital interests. For Austin Osman Spare, the darkest of these periods began in 1924. Then recently separated from his wife and living in reduced circumstances, the critical failure of his publishing venture *The Golden Hind* triggered a deep personal crisis for our artist. Disconnected from an evolving art world, Spare's creative energies turned inward and he began a series of extraordinarily powerful works intended to fully capture his bitter desperation and fragile hope.

As one of these major 'lost' works *The Valley of Fear* is an unpublished sketchbook of 20 vigorous yet haunting studies from this bleak and difficult period. Designed as a companion volume to *The Book of Ugly Ecstasy* (Fulgur, 1996) here the delicately tinted original drawings have been reproduced in full colour. The work has been augmented by an introductory essay by Robert Ansell in which the metaphysical themes are explored and Spare's methodologies for creating states of magical aesthesis for his audience are examined and discussed.

valley-of-fear.jpg

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"The Valley of Fear arrived today and once again you guys have done an outstanding job. Every single Fulgur Ltd book has been an example of fine aesthetic unity in books arts. It is always a pleasure to receive a new volume. The dustwrapper design is awesome.. as is the entire book. Thank you so much."

"Thanks for the prompt response. The Valley of Fear has arrived and is, as I have come to expect from Fulgur, an astonishing book."

"Just to let you know that The Valley of Fear arrived safely. It is truly a fantastic piece of work, and I am very impressed indeed. It has been well worth the long wait, and I'm sure you are very pleased to see it finally in the hands of people that appreciate Spare's work. Thankyou so much for producing such wonderful talismans..."

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Issue One – Autumn Equinox 2009
Abraxas-banner

Treadwells and Fulgur are delighted to announce the first issue of our new esoteric journal ABRAXAS is now in press. In keeping with our intent, writers and artists have kindly submitted material from across the globe: Australia, the United States, Mexico, Italy and the United Kingdom are keenly represented.

Nearly all the material is published for the first time. Here may be found inspiring essays from luminaries within the esoteric community, many of them written especially for the journal. Artists too are well represented, both established masters and emerging talents: a feast for the eyes and soul. Our poets include Allyson Shaw, Zachary Cox and, from beyond the veil, Aleister Crowley, whose evocative verse 'Babalon' finally finds itself in print more than sixty years after it was written.

Produced in a large quarto format, with 128 pages printed on high quality paper and richly illustrated in colour and monochrome, we hope Abraxas will offer you a strange mirror through which may be glimpsed the zeitgeist of the global occult community today.

Literary contributions for this inaugural issue include:

The Green Intercessor
Tutelary Spirits and the Transmission of Plant-Magic
Daniel A. Schulke

Caveat Anonyter!

A Study of Flying Ointments and their Plants
Sarah Penicka-Smith

Sorceries of the Threshold
Transgression into the Between States
Anon

The Uncertainty of Illumination
Gnosis and Epistemology in Traditional Craft
Stuart Inman

Lucifer by Starlight
An Interview with Francesco Parisi

The Third Eye
The Fantastic World of Lobsang Rampa
Phil Hine

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Edward Gauntlett

Skip Witches, Hop Toads
Stephen Grasso

A Dream of Witchcraft Turned to Nightmare
The Five Witches of Albrecht Durer
John Callow

On Sappho
James Butler

Ordering
We are now accepting pre-orders, both for the deluxe issue and for the standard. The publication date is officially September 22nd, but due to the Esoteric Book Conference in Seattle, orders will be dispatched by mid-October. We might even have a launch party at Treadwells around Samhain.

Issue One
Garden-of-Proserpine

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Francesco Parisi is one of Italy's most respected and critically acclaimed wood-engravers. His symbolist work has been secured by some of the worlds most prestigious institutions, such as the British Museum Department of Prints and Drawings, as well as musicians such as COIL. In offering us a hand-printed edition of 'The Garden of Proserpine' Francesco is therefore making a very generous gift in support of our inaugural issue. The original woodblock is reproduced opposite, before the delicate work of cutting the image is undertaken.

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About this capture

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Barry William Hale

By Jack Sargeant

Barry William Hale has been described as an occult artist, while a superficially germane term; on closer inspection it radiates a self-consciously unwelcome specificity. Too redolent of those early twentieth century outsider artists whose work depended on visionary states, specific knowledge of ancient mysteries, or some other Qabalistic obscurity. Hale, it should be noted, has certainly done nothing to dissuade such labels,

mischievously luxuriating in such terms when fitting. It is apparent from his biography that he is, for example, an outspoken member of the OTO. But such groups encourage individual exploration, undoubtedly an attraction to Hale whose very genealogy radiates the outlaw.

Hale was born to hardcore hippy parents, who lived on one of the first Australian communes, according to the artist his biological father was allegedly involved in distributing LSD to a grateful Australian hippie community. Hale was raised by an adoptive family of socialists and masons, but maintains contact with his expanded family.

In his studies – both esoteric and aesthetic – he has explored yogic states and even undergone periods of sensory deprivation in specifically designed laboratories. These, and other, intense methods of self investigation have led to Hale working with neuroscientists to investigate bio-feedback while in deep meditative states. In addition he is a student of the Chinese martial art. Choy Lee Fut, rumored to be the preferred fighting style of the Triads.

Hale's work is not a mere rendition of the hermeneutics of high ritual magic, rather Hale gravitates to sorcery, to Haitian voodoo, to Congolese palo mayombe, to folk forms of religious expression and ecstatic explorations that owe more to the oral traditions of the disenfranchised slave communities than to arcane studies in dusty libraries. This is not to suggest that Hale is not a scholar of the western esoteric tradition, but rather that he has explored and worked with other forms.

But folk magic emerging from the Mexican barrio and the New Orleans ghetto makes sense when considering Hale's work, with its material emphasis on what is condescendingly referred to as 'craft' and that which many ethnographers would still in their arrogance label as 'primitive culture'. From his experiences in Haiti and New Orleans, Hale has produced a series of voodoo bourbon bottles, their labels painted with the signs and images of Loa. A tribute to the culture and to the artist's experiences both autobiographical and magical. Other works involve cutting paper silhouettes, a form of expression common in the magical rituals of the Mexican Limpas, but Hale's paper-cuts depict the pantheon of plague demons of the Middle Ages. For his published debut he has chosen this remarkable work, depicting the 49 Servitors of Beelzebub taken from The Book of Abramelin, combining the central magical tome with the artwork more familiar with the barrio. Hale mixes rigorous scholarly research into the Book of Abramelin with the chthonic pantheon of Mexico, presenting his own vision.

Barry Hale's influences are, however, far more than just variations on indigenous forms. This is not glib orientalism, smug tourism or hip voyeurism. Looking at his work it is unsurprising to discover Hale trained to be a tattooist, the bold graphic style echoing the

classic flash-sheets of the old school skin-and-ink artist. And there is more at play here, sideshow art, underground comic books, fifties men's magazines, industrial logos, and Tijuana Bibles are all evident in his iconographic reservoir. His predecessors are underground comic book artists such as Robert Williams and the Coop, as well classic occult artists such as Austin Spare and Rosaline Norton. Barry Hale immerses himself in popular art even while creating images that are bewildering in the occult complexity of their significance. Thus a design he produced for the Oceanic Lodge of an OTO depicts the delicious curves of a voluptuous naked pomba-gira, the delicate petals of indigenous Australian flower the waratah, the dove, and the radiating light of knowledge. This juxtaposition of images both sacred and profane formed the design for a t-shirt, a medium and form more often associated with the biker-gang or punk band than that with a magical order. While designs and illustrations for the highly acclaimed Oceanic Currents issue of the Waratah journal reveal an artist of exceptional sensibilities.

This embrace of outlaw pop-culture extends into the dissemination of Hale's work. During his one-man exhibition in Sydney's Front Room Gallery, at which Hale exhibited some seven hundred automatic drawings, which looked like a bastard cross between Austin Spare and Savage Pencil, Hale employed a Carney-style barker. The barker's role was to cajole and rile the audience at the gallery, while swigging rum and hollering his-own version of the apocalypse to the surprise and entertainment of the assembled crowd.

Hale's work – across various manifestations and themes – is about demons and apocalypse. The avatars of liberty, and the moments of true liberation , freeing and illuminating the human spirit.

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Barry Hale on MySpace

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May 20th 2009

Legion 49 – Publication Date and Launch Party, June 11th

Following a tremendous response in the wake of our announcement of the publication of Barry Hale's new book {more} we are pleased to confirm there will be a launch party at Treadwell's on June 11th, commencing 7.00pm. Barry will be there to sign copies and there are rumours even of an impromptu performance that should create a real buzzzz... Capacity is limited, so be sure to reserve a spot with Christina before the day!

March 29th 2009

Events, events, events...

There is some very cool stuff happening in 2009 which, as always, we are really delighted to support. In addition to the welcome re-launch of the respected one day orgy of all things pagan that is known as Occulture on May 23rd, there is also the irresistible Thelemic glamour of the new three day Equinox Festival in London on June 12-14th. We understand tickets are limited and going fast, but given the music line-up alone that's not surprising!

In addition, we are really delighted to support a very important new event for every magickally-minded American book-lover: the first Esoteric Book Conference in Seattle on September 19th-20th. We predict this event will become the essential date in every bibliomancer's calendar.

All this good news calls for a serious drink, so may we recommend a drop of the green stuff? The highly talented team that distilled 'Mansinthe' have now brought us a tribute to Zos, released here in early April. You heard it here first! Salut!

UPDATED – Zos Speaks!

February 10th 2009

A decade after it was first published, we are sad to announce Zos Speaks! is nearly out of print. We have just 12 copies remaining of this luscious hardback. If getting one of these has been on your 'to do' list, now is your moment, or you can wait until copies appear on eBay at £100 a pop!

Original Art by Austin Osman Spare

February 6th 2009

Our latest catalogue of Zosiana, including a drawing from The Book of Pleasure period!
{More}

Free Postage

February 2nd 2009

We are now pleased to offer our UK customers free postage and packing for all orders shipped within the UK mainland. Our e-commerce facilities have been updated accordingly. Due to the high cost of international shipping, some charges still apply to EU customers.

The Great Toe Press
8th August 2008

La Maison de Poupee

Today we celebrate our birthday and sixteen years of esoteric publishing. To mark the threshold of adulthood we are pleased to announce an independent new sister imprint for Fulgur. The Great Toe Press will maintain the high production values of our core business, but will provide expression for more personal art-related projects, such as the grotesque magick of La Maison de Poupees and the photoglyphic grimoire, XII Elementals. Produced in very limited numbers, these titles will be available direct to subscribers only. Full details will be announced in due course.

CHRISTMAS ORDERS
December 6th 2008

If you are thinking about buying one of our titles for a loved one, there is still time to order for Christmas delivery, but our last date of dispatch will be December 13th. Due to our usual Saturnalia excesses, for orders placed after this date please allow 28 days delivery..

Original Art by Austin Spare
October 15th 2008

We are delighted to offer a new selection of original works by Zos, many of which have never been seen on the open market... {More}

Scintillations in Mauve II
An Introduction to the Work of Kenneth Grant by Michael Staley

There are few people who know the work of Kenneth Grant better than Mick Staley. Here Treadwell's offers the lucky few ringside seats for an evening of Typhonian tentacles and tantra on December 17th. Be quick, book now!

Original Art for Sale
29th July 2008

We are delighted to offer a small collection of AOS items from a UK private collection, including three superb portraits, one a very magickal piece, a selection of sketches and a few scarce original AOS titles...

Rare Fulgur Material
27th May 2008

After nearly 20 years we thought it a good time to tidy our warehouse, which is

beginning to resemble the final scene from Raiders of the Lost Ark. After many hours slaving in darkened chasms, we have unearthed material placed in storage more than a decade ago. In response to the many enquiries we receive, there is therefore a very limited quantity of rare Fulgur titles and ephemera available...

Orryelle Defenestrade-Basculé
January 21st 2007

We are pleased to announce Orryelle Defenestrade-Basculé has joined our growing list of authors. Globe-travelling Orryelle will be known to many of you through his numerous international ritual-performances, his writing and his art. We are indebted to Nema for a short biography and account of his work that has been especially written for Fulgur and may be found on our authors menu. Orryelle is currently working on Conjunctio, full details of which will be released later in the year.

Bertiaux Bonanza
May 24th 2007

Treadwell's hosted a double delight for fans of all things Bertiaux on May 23rd. David Beth delivered his second synopsis of the Voudon Gnostic System and it was followed in style with the launch party for Cosmic Meditation... {Images}

Revised Website
April 30th 2007

After many months of work our new website is now operational. Thanks are due to Gyrus who worked diligently to produce an elegant and refined site that we hope you all agree is an improvement over the old design. We have taken opportunity to include many new features, including biographies for our authors together with galleries, articles and bibliographies concerning their work. Many overseas students have voiced frustration at not being able to easily find the original AOS material, so we have introduced an e-books section where visitors can download PDF facsimiles of Spare's big five for free. We have also introduced e-commerce facilities so subscribers can update their own address details and receive email confirmation of receipt of their order. We hope you enjoy the new site!

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WordPress 2.8.4: Security Release

Posted August 12, 2009 by Matt. Filed under Releases, Security.

Yesterday a vulnerability was discovered: a specially crafted URL could be requested that would allow an attacker to bypass a security check to verify a user requested a password reset. As a result, the first account without a key in the database (usually the admin account) would have its password reset and a new password would be emailed to the account owner. This doesn't allow remote access, but it is very annoying.

We fixed this problem last night and have been testing the fixes and looking for other problems since then. Version 2.8.4 which fixes all known problems is now available for download and is highly recommended for all users of WordPress.

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Photo by AmodaliHi, I'm Steve Taylor. I'm based in London, and I build websites for a living. I've been working on the web for over a decade, covering a wide range of skills and roles. These days I mostly enjoy setting people up with easy-to-manage WordPress-driven sites and building standards-based, accessible XHTML/CSS templates.

You can see some of my work in the portfolio, and I write about web stuff in my blog. If you want to discuss a possible project, please get in touch! Or learn more about my services and approach first.

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R-L: Barry Hale and his wife Lynsey and daughter Lumi with Robert Ansell at the Equinox Festival.

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Cosmic Meditation

by Michael Bertiaux

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This new edition of Cosmic Meditation is the first in a series of forthcoming works from Fulgur by the philosopher and occult author Michael Bertiaux.

An introduction to a way of thinking, Cosmic Meditation explores the universe from the standpoint of the spiritist philosophy. Through a simple, but multi-layered narrative the author guides the reader on an inner journey of exploration, making connections between the metaphysical and spiritist philosophies.

The original work was privately printed and first appeared in limited numbers nearly thirty years ago. In this new edition the text has been revised, corrected and augmented with a new introduction and many illustrations drawn especially for this edition.

The paperback edition is limited to 700 numbered copies, 669 of which are for sale.

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Passing Cosmic Meditation on press

Passing Cosmic Meditation for quality during printing at Acanthus Press, May 2007

David Beth in full flow...

David Beth gives his lucid synopsis of Michael Bertiaux's Voudon Gnostic System at Treadwell's, May 23rd 2007

cosmed-launch-3.jpg

After David's talk, the party begins, L-R: Roberto Migliussi, Robert Ansell, David Beth and Michael Staley

Meditating during the speech...

cosmed-launch-2.jpg

Treadwell's hospitality in full swing...

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Hidden Lore, Hermetic Glyphs

by Kenneth and Steffi Grant

Hidden Lore Hermetic Glyphs

When writing the original synopsis of this work in the early 1960s, the authors made clear that the purpose of The Carfax Monographs was to reconstruct and elucidate the hidden lore of the West according to the canons preserved in various modern esoteric orders and movements.

These monographs, originally produced as a series of ten privately published essays with corresponding illustrations, achieved this objective by a careful presentation of symbolic designs. Not only were they unique in what they had to say, but a proper regard to colour, proportion, attribution and accuracy of technical detail made them a 'veritable grimoire' for those able to apply the formulae contained within.

The original series of ten slim monographs are of extreme rarity for collectors today, being limited to just 100 copies each and issued over a four year period between 1959 and 1963. The illustrations by Steffi Grant were often hand-coloured and further illuminated with gold and silver inks, rendering each copy in the original series unique. A new edition, produced over fifteen years ago, was quickly rendered out of print and is now eagerly sought after by collectors.

This new edition by Fulgur, retitled Hidden Lore, Hermetic Glyphs, has been revised and expanded. The original ten essays and corresponding illustrations have been augmented with a new essay by Steffi Grant and nearly 20 new colour illustrations. Enlarged in format and printed on 150gsm semi-coated Italian GardaPat matt, the whole work has been reproduced in a six colour process with gold and silver accents fully to capture the vibrancy and intimacy of the original designs. The standard edition is bound in Italian Assuan cloth and the special edition in Harmatan niger morocco with hand-made Japanese endpapers. The entire edition has been hand-numbered and will

not be reprinted.

Produced as a strictly limited hand-numbered edition, Hidden Lore, Hermetic Glyphs offers the reader a rare chance to acquire key texts by two of the most highly respected and creative authors in the genre today.

Hidden Lore cover

Small folio, 335mm x 245mm

88 pages

35 illustrations, mostly full page, printed in six colours on GardaPat 150gsm

Hardback, card slipcase, strictly limited to 777 hand-numbered copies (£66.00) + p&p

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Lashtal.com

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The complex six-colour process required careful checking.

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Isabelle Fraser helps with packing and numbering the edition...

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Borough Satyr: The Life and Art of Austin Osman Spare
edited by Robert Ansell

Borough Satyr

There can be few artists whose life was quite as extraordinary as that of Austin Osman Spare. Born the son of a City of London policeman, in 1904 he became the youngest ever exhibitor at the Royal Academy and was celebrated by critics and London society alike, but at the apex of his fame the First World War and a failing marriage prompted him to return to his roots in South London. There, inspired by strange visions and the lives of those around him he devoted his rare talents to recording his thoughts, dreams and the world as he saw it: sublime, haunting and magical.

Borough Satyr: The Life and Art of Austin Osman Spare is the long awaited full colour introduction to the work of this astonishing London artist. Accompanying an exhibition at The Maas Gallery (15a Clifford Street, London, W1) the book contains a comprehensive collection of his art complemented by a biographical introduction, a checklist of his exhibitions and essays by those who knew Spare well throughout his life, including classic recollections from Hannen Swaffer, Clifford Bax, Kenneth and Steffi Grant, Hadyn Mackay, Ithell Colquhoun, John Smith and others.

Borough Satyr upper cover

Landscape 4to, 240mm x 295mm

96 pages

74 colour illustrations

Hardback limited edition of 500 hand-numbered copies £58.00 + p&p

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Reviews

It's been a long, strange trip for Austin Osman Spare, artist, animist, occultist and outsider (FT144:34-40). By the late 1920s, at what some consider to be the height of his powers, he had more or less abandoned the art world though certainly not his art – for the hermetic life of a seer, living alone with his artist's tools, his cats and his visions. Following his death in 1956, Spare's vision was kept alive almost exclusively by occultists and esotericists, for whom he remains a powerful avatar, and it is predominantly within this world that his pictures have changed hands.

Now, it seems, his career is coming full circle, with a recent exhibition in London's Mayfair, where the career of a 17-year-old Spare was ignited at the Royal Academy's 1904 Summer show. Cynics might say that reintroducing Spare to the art world is merely a bid to chase more moneyed collectors – occultists, Spare himself amongst them, are traditionally penniless after all – but it's a necessary move if Spare is to gain the status he deserves as one of the most remarkable British artists of the 20th century.

Borough Satyr arrives, then, with perfect timing, to bridge the gap between these two worlds; and to introduce Spare the artist to the occult community, and Spare the occultist to the art world. Ultimately, however, it is about Spare the man: this collection of essays and articles by critics, friends and admirers, drawn from various sources both during and beyond Spare's lifetime, provides an elegantly rounded portrait of the artist, and of his uneasy relationship with the art and media establishments. This being a Fulgur book, it is exquisitely produced (even the errata slip is a thing of beauty) and profusely illustrated with fine examples of Spare's work and photographs of the artist throughout his life.

Following a lucid and illuminating introduction from Fulgur's Robert Ansell, we get "Boy Artist at the R.A.", from The Daily Chronicle of 1904. Here the teen prodigy is already "devising a religion of my own" and describing a process of automatic writing and drawing some 15 years before Breton's Las Champs Magnétiques. Through the course of the other pieces we learn that Spare was always "different", a true outsider drawn into high society but unable, or unwilling, to operate by its norms or stomach its values.

Spare the man seems to have weathered the impoverished conditions of his later life with dignity and good humour it was the path he had chosen for himself. As is pointed out, his obvious talents would have made a lucrative position as a painter of society portraits a relatively straightforward proposition. Instead he made haunting, resonant studies of his fellow Southwark-dwellers, images that should really hang in the National Portrait Gallery.

The real tragedy of Spare, as expressed by Haydn Mackay in an obituary for his friend, is the loss to the nation's artistic heritage: "How comes it about that our galleries can afford thousands of pounds for [...] inferior examples of stranger contemporary artists, but could not find a fiver for a Spare during [his] lifetime?" With the exceptions of his WWI commissions at the Imperial War Museum and Wellcome Institute, and a handful of pieces at the Victoria & Albert, it is only thanks to the likes of Fulgur that his work can be seen publicly at all.

Fortean Times

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Crowds spill onto the street...

The launch for the Borough Satyr show at the Maas Gallery, Halloween, 2005

A packed house...

The popular lower gallery was always packed...

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Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare
by Kenneth Grant

Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare

Without doubt one of the most important works on Spare ever published, this ground-breaking book has deservedly won an enviable reputation in modern occult studies. Out of print for over 20 years, it is offered once again as a facsimile of the original edition. Excerpts from Spare's Zoetic Grimoire, a biographical essay, a thesis on the magical systems of Zos and many rare illustrations of manuscripts and pictures go to make this work essential reading for all those interested in AOS.

Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare cover

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104 pages
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“...This facsimile edition has a new preface by Grant, then follows the strikingly well designed 1975 original, but it is actually better. It has been reset, the numerous illustrations – most of them not seen elsewhere – have been freshly photographed, and the overall effect is sharper, warmer, and easier to handle. Produced to Fulgur’s usual superb standard, this heavy duty paperback edition has transformed Images and Oracles from a keep-it-in-the-safe book to a read-it-in-the-bath book. It is barely available in bookshops, and better obtained direct from Fulgur.”

Fortean Times

“Kenneth Grant, Spare’s literary executor, wrote Images and Oracles almost 30 years ago and this edition is the most recent reprint. Fulgur initially brought this out in hardback (very covetable) and now the paperback is available (very affordable). In modern times you will find publishers will often cut corners in editions with a view to shifting the most amount of copies at the cheapest price possible, with very little by way of actually making an object of beauty. Perhaps we should allow for the stark realities of commerce, but, oh, what a joy to have an edition that is as pleasing aesthetically as the content is enthralling....”

Prediction Magazine

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Study for a Portrait of Frank Letchford

by Gavin Semple

Driven by a personal quest for the eccentric and unusual the young art connoisseur Frank Letchford sought out Austin Osman Spare in 1937. Through twenty years of close friendship he became Spare's student, amanuensis and benefactor, and after the

artist's death sustained a tireless effort to further his work and ideas. Mr. Letchford's untimely death in 1998 was a great loss not only to his family and friends, but also to the global network of cognoscenti of Spare's uniquely wayward genius. This affectionate tribute by Gavin W. Semple is fully illustrated and examines the character of a man who enjoyed Spare's close companionship over the last two decades of the artist's life. Through their relationship we are given insights into a lesser-known side of 'The Magician of Southwark' – that of Zos as paternal teacher, humanist and friend.

Frank Letchford

8vo, 210mm x 148mm

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Formula of Zos vel Thanatos

Austin Osman Spare made this magical stele for Kenneth and Steffi Grant in 1954. The design incorporates portraits of the artist and both recipients, with Steffi Grant represented as the goddess Isis. Replete with secret glyphs and sigillic formulae, the stele may be regarded as the icon par excellence for the Zos Kia Cultus and New Isis Lodge.

Working direct from the original artwork, Fulgur has produced a large limited edition print to the highest standards. Printed by a Mutoh six-colour giclee printer on Hahnemuhle 310gsm German Etching coated mould made acid free paper, the image offers excellent longevity, sharpness and colour graduation. The printed image is 42cm x 28cm.

This edition is strictly limited to ninety-three examples, blind-stamped with the Fulgur motif and signed and numbered by Kenneth and Steffi Grant.

The print is available unframed for £93.00, or framed as the example illustrated above for £123.00. Please note: due the difficulties of shipping, we cannot send framed examples overseas.

Unframed £93.00

Framed £123.00

EDITION SOLD OUT

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“When the earthquake hit Folkestone a lot of things were smashed, but the Stele of Zos vel Thanatos framed print was thrown off the wall, eight feet across the room, smashed into a wall and was completely unharmed. So Fulgur products are proven earthquake proof. You can put that on the website...”

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We have been fortunate enough to work with some of the most respected and influential names in modern esoteric studies.

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Austin Osman Spare

Austin Osman Spare, c.1907 © Copyright Fulgur Limited

Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956) is one of the most influential and innovative figures in twentieth century occultism. A natural artist and psychic, Spare's explorations of the creative focus gave rise to an ontology and body of work that departs radically from conventional occultism, both then and now. Ahead of his time, he was dismissed by Crowley early in his career, but found appreciation and understanding with the next generation, who embraced his ideas with alacrity.

A true Londoner, Spare was born in December 1886 near the Holborn Viaduct and

spent most of his life no more than 10 miles from his place of birth. Living in the shadow of a burgeoning Smithfield Market, the family soon moved south of the river to Kennington, then a vibrant borough with music halls, taverns and a history of political and religious dissent. Spare's formative years were spent at the school attached to the nearby Catholic church of St. Agnes, yet although many of his early drawings show us traditional religious themes, there is also evidence of interests in Eastern mysticism, Theosophy and Spiritualism. This latter movement was to become a key influence in the development of Spare's ontology, especially the central role played by 'automatism' which came to form the basis of the artist's *modus operandi*.

In 1904 a small drawing executed when Spare was just fourteen was accepted into the Royal Academy Summer show and he was thrust suddenly into the public gaze. The experience was stressful, but proved to be a catalyst, for the following year Spare published his first book, *Earth: Inferno*. It remains a powerful work and made clear Spare's agenda: mystical, grotesque, often dark and polemic, *Earth: Inferno* seeks to challenge the reader to see the world askance, through the eyes of the artist. A second folio, more politically slanted and titled with mocking humor *A Book of Satyrs* was privately published in 1907 - just prior to his first notorious West End exhibition at The Bruton Gallery. If there had been any doubt as to Spare's intent, this show dispelled any lingering uncertainty. One critic wrote: "His inventive faculty is stupendous and terrifying in its creative flow of impossible horrors ..." The shy boy artist from Kennington had become the *enfant terrible* of Mayfair.

The Book of Pleasure by Austin Spare, 1913. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

The years between 1909 and 1913 were Spare's golden era. He staged several West End exhibitions and enjoyed numerous commissions from private collectors and publishers. The period reached its apex in 1913 with the publication of Spare's masterpiece, *The Book of Pleasure*. Inspired by his marriage to the actress Eily Gertrude Shaw in 1911 the book is now regarded as a classic in 20th century esoteric studies. Complex and obscure, Spare's writing in *The Book of Pleasure* sketches out a vision of a magical process entirely devoid of ceremony and thus swept away all conventional notions of ritual praxis.

By the outbreak of War, Spare's marriage was faltering. His refusal to compromise artistically left him vulnerable to the shifting cultural zeitgeist and the ensuing financial difficulties, combined with his conscription as an Official War Artist, placed enormous pressure on the relationship. But it was Spare's satyr-like sexual reputation that probably ended the marriage: his fourth book, *The Focus of Life*, published in 1921, delivers a dream-like narrative and voluptuous pencil nudes - none of which were his wife. It was well received, but Spare found himself out-of-step and alienated from London's art society and he retreated to his roots in South London.

The 1920s were a period of intense introspection for the artist. Living and working in his tiny studio in the Borough Spare's anger and frustration manifested in 1927 with his last published book *Anathema of Zos*: it was not well received. After the failure of his 1927

and 1929 shows, Spare produced his most commercial work for years. His exhibition at the Godfrey Philips Gallery in 1930 was full of beautiful elongated portraits of women and film stars collectively titled "Experiments in Relativity". Despite the global depression they were a moderate success, but it was to be his last West End show for 17 years and by 1932 Spare joked with his journalist friend Hannen Swaffer that he was contemplating "the gas oven".

Salvation came in an unexpected form, an old sweetheart Ada Millicent Pain inspired Spare to renew his efforts and the arrival of Surrealism in London in 1936 gave him added impetus. At the age of fifty, Spare's abilities to produce exquisite, fine ink and pencil drawings were deteriorating and he shifted his focus towards the more fluid medium of pastels. His three shows of 1936, 1937 and 1938 received significant press coverage, but tragically in 1941, at the height of the Blitz, Spare's studio in the Walworth Road received a direct hit and was completely destroyed. Spare was injured and after some months as a nomad he found a home in Brixton with his childhood friend Ada Millicent Pain. Yet Spare, nearly 60 and in failing health, was about to enter one of the most productive and successful periods of his life.

His exhibition at the Archer Gallery in 1947, engineered by his journalist friend Dennis Bardens and for which he produced over 200 works, was almost a complete sell-out and ushered in his astonishing post-war renaissance. Assisted by his friend Frank Letchford and inspired by the late Aleister Crowley's protégé Kenneth Grant and his wife Steffi, Spare's exhibitions mid tavern-shows of the early 1950s showed a mature artist of incredible vigour and imaginative power. At the age of sixty-eight his command of the pastel medium could scarcely be equaled and he received the willing patronage of doctors, psychologists, journalists, teachers, critics and connoisseurs.

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The following articles on AOS have appeared over the last 100 years and chart the way appreciation of his art and philosophy has evolved. Friends, acquaintances and

contemporary critics have written many of them and collectively they give us the best insight into Spare's character and life. In addition there is a substantial representation of work from leading lights in contemporary Spare studies, reproduced here with permission. The material has been listed in chronological order of appearance.

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Austin Osman Spare: A Note on His Work by Ralph Straus

Symbolism in Aesthetics in Relation to the Art of Austin O. Spare by Grace Rogers

Pictures of the Occult by a Psychical Artist

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Austin O. Spare
by R.E.D. Sketchley

First published in The Art Journal, 1908

There must be few people in London interested in art who do not know the name of Austin Osman Spare. The recent exhibition of his drawings made a sudden reputation for him, and the few who before the bringing together of his work had knowledge of his extraordinary talent are part now of a considerable public. This, at all events, is certain: nobody who saw the drawings at the Bruton Gallery can have been indifferent to them. They may have stirred repulsion, or an ugly form of curiosity, only here and there rebuked by some pure beauty in the work, but no one can have seen them dully and forgotten what they are like. The drawing on the catalogue-cover had power enough to turn people away from the exhibition, or allure them to it, not only because power is

interesting, but because of the kind of jeering, loose-lipped image of life suggested. It is a hateful image of evil sight, the coarse-fleshed face of the eighteenth century Satan-type, but expressive of no idea of energy even in destruction or accusation.

Inferno by Austin Spare p.9, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

In the power shown in producing convincing form the drawing on the catalogue is a real introduction to the art of Austin Spare, and it is partly true, too, in its suggestion of a rout of foul shapes thronging into sight. But it is not completely true as an indication of the actual contents of this copious and forcible art, and I believe it to be no true introduction to what Spare has the power to create, if his art from being the almost involuntary utterance of all that seethes in his mind becomes a reasoned expression of the essential.

At present, it seems to me, the form of Mr Spare's art is a process, not a conclusion. He is still very young, and much of the work shown at the Bruton Galleries was done some years ago; at any time since he was fourteen. It is an extraordinary out-put for a boy, especially when one considers that what was shown is only a small part of what he has done. But this copious discharge of imagery is, I think, rather the preparation for creative art than the declaration of it. The passing from the stage when an idea possesses the mind to the stage when the mind possesses the idea, is held, in a true sequence of the seven ages, to mark the passing of youth to manhood. Though on the technical side Austin Spare has developed through discipline a considerable strength of self-criticism, he has been occupied with reproducing the forms of his imagination almost without question or reason. The present result of this unquestioning reproduction of the forms that rise before his inward eye is to fill his art with monstrous and morbid shapes. Yet it is not really paradoxical to assert the very violence and distortion in proof of the essential healthiness and naturalness of his imaginative faculties. It is not paradoxical. But needs explanation, since the reconciliation of the fantastical with the normal is in the personality of the artist, and that needs to be realised before his art can be appraised.

River Styx by Austin Spare, c.1906. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

There is so much intelligence, and so little imagination, in modern art that the interpretation put on fantasies such as those of Mr. Spare is that they are the result of deliberate invention or imitation. There is an undoubted strain of likeness in much of his black-and-white work to that of Beardsley, and a similarity of mood in dealing with certain aspects of life. These qualities make it certain to the casual observer that the source of formal inspiration is the art of Beardsley, and that, having seen distorted ideas of good and evil enformed with beauty in the designs of the illustrator of 'Salome', Mr. Spare proceeded to an artificial intensification of 'fact', which should be more stimulating than the reality. More learned critics have assigned a great deal else in Austin Spare's work to the influence of other potent fantasists – to Goya, to Rops, to Hokusai, and to Greiner of Munich. As a matter of fact, Mr. Spare only made acquaintance with the art of Beardsley after he had done some of his most Beardsley-like designs, and with other of

these “influences” he has not yet come into contact. When he does, if his work shows the effect, it will be – as the case of ‘The Magician’ and other designs that reflect the qualities of Japanese colour-prints – because he finds his own language used by a master who can teach him farther secrets of rhythm and contrast and phraseology.

The source of his art is himself, the deepest, not yet fully known or controlled self, from which, by thought, proceeds creative power of every kind. In his case the sense of inward sight is extraordinarily vivid. The drawing of himself removing the curtain from the mirror, and calling attention to what is seen therein, is as near possible to a precise image of his feeling about his work. Technically, of course, he identifies himself with it. If it is good, he feels striven to make it so; if it is bad, he must seek to remedy the failure. If with all effort it fails to be expressive of the effortless vision, he is the critic that destroys. But on “good” or “bad” qualities in his design other than aesthetic he has no self-criticism to bestow, though he is as ready as though another hand had drawn them, to dislike certain more violent and repulsive of them.

Austin Spare’s attitude is the normal and healthy attitude of the artist, but we are, most of us, so beset with self-consciousness that it is improbable we will ever be generally dissociated from what is morbid or extravagant in his art, or not be held to show immoral tendencies if his art expresses no moral judgements. But I think that he himself, in steadier and more complete realisations of true vision, will dissociate himself from characterisation of the foul and horrible.

The unimaginative reason which assigns the appearances of things to categories of good and evil is a law of prudence, not of creation, and therefore inoperative in art. Mr. Spare was wise about that at sixteen years old. In the *Earth Inferno* he wrote of “The Chaos of the Normal”, and that chaos is the apparent divided into opposites by the unimaginative reason. But, in the same remarkable book, he wrote “revere the Kia”, and the “kia” in the nomenclature that he, like Blake, has invented for his needs of expression, is the indivisible point, the spiritual reason in man, and, in greater creation, the boundless power of which it is the reflection. That single and pure reason, the harmony that is born of peace and strife and the union of all other opposites, is not the inspiration of art that elaborates the horrible and morbid. When – it may be now – Mr. Spare has realised his power to control and purify his imagination, it must be that the forms of his art will image no more a “Chaos of the abnormal”, but a Cosmos, an ordering of beauty in the image of perfect beauty.

That is no mere hope generated by the desire that so strong and penetrative an imagination and a technique already remarkable in expressive draughtsmanship and imaginative colour, should fulfil a fine achievement. The art of Mr. Spare, as it now is, is not the true reflection of what is essential in his vision of life. The output of a phase of morbid imagination in an artist of twenty is not to be taken as significant of what he will do later, even if it agrees with the whole personality. But already Austin Spare is reaching towards greater simplicity of idea, and, at the same time, towards a fuller technical accomplishment, more assured draughtsmanship and composition, the use of colour in oil and tempera as well as water-colour. The imaginative and aesthetic issue

must be a matter of deep interest to all who know his work and realise the sources of it.

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Austin Osman Spare: A Note on His Work
by Ralph Straus

First published in The Booklover's Magazine, 1909

AOS at home, 15 Kennington Park Gardens, 1904. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

One must never forget that in the best days of art there were no art critics, and I sometimes wonder whether a time will come when art-criticism will be included amongst the grosser crimes. It is so easy, and so monotonous, to speak dreary platitudes about the inexplicability of beauty with the firm intention of following them by a fairly minute exposition of its qualities.

It is so easy to be fulsomely adulatory or impertinent, or merely contemptuous, and no one has yet convinced me that interpretation is a necessary complement to an art. One may talk of the conquest of intelligence over imagination in modern work; one may speak of this school or that, and one may express a good-humoured, if slightly superior, astonishment at a particular work of art which does not seem to have been built up on what are known, rather curiously, as regular lines; but I honestly doubt whether the juxtaposition of modern artist and modern critic is adding very much to the art save from the standpoint of history. I may admire the composition and disparage the technique, or I may enjoy the colouring and fall foul of the subject; as critic, in fact, I have enormous powers – but the powers are probably uniquely immoral. 'A critic,' wrote Hazlitt, 'does nothing nowadays who does not try to torture the most obvious expression into a thousand meanings, and enter into a circuitous explanation of all that can be urged for or against its being in the best or worst style possible' – which is the last goal at which I should wish to aim. 'To elevate and surprise,' continues the same author, 'is the great rule for producing a dramatic or critical effect.' Here again it is necessary to say that I have no thoughts of causing either surprise or elevation. Probably, however, I am not a 'critic' at all.'

At the beginning of this year there was an exhibition of drawings in the Bruton Gallery by a hitherto unknown artist, and the critics thereupon made many curious and contradictory discoveries. That the artist had 'undeniable power' was very generally allowed. That he had accumulated horrors was as certain as that his ambition was of the 'wrong' kind. To one writer this work suggested a 'jeering, loose-limbed image of life,' whilst another informed the world that the exhibitor had learned more than a little from Japan. The artist, according to the last-mentioned, 'might become an impressive

and penetrating realist, but we are not yet convinced that he has the gift of imagination even in those regions-neither of earth or hell, and certainly not of heaven – in which he loves to dwell – we might have said to wallow.’ To others his work was a weird imitation of Beardsley and Goya and Rops and Hokusai and Greiner of Munich. To one he was brutal beyond measure, or even decency; to another he was merely fantastic and immature. To one he was in deadly earnest, to another he was a rather morbid poseur. ‘His gaze,’ wrote a critic in *The Daily Telegraph*, ‘has assuredly not been upwards; we hope that his fall may not be fatal. Falling let him embrace his mother Earth, and from her derive true strength and a measure of sanity.’ The exhibition was described as a ‘strange, uncomfortable show.’

Bruton Gallery Catalogue, 1907. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

I did not see that ‘strange, uncomfortable show,’ but it led incidentally to the penning of a sentence which I wish to quote. ‘Nobody,’ wrote Miss Sketchley in the *Art Journal* ‘who saw the drawings in the Bruton Gallery can have been indifferent to them.’ In view of what I have seen I can well believe those words. Whatever opinion might have been entertained of their merits or demerits, the drawings of this unknown artist could not be ignored. Who, then, was this man who, with a small collection of curiously baffling pictures, had suddenly sprung himself upon the mercies of artistic, or inartistic, London? He turned out to be a boy of nineteen, the son of a retired member of the Police Force, and certain of the newspapers claimed to have already discovered him. In point of fact, he had been interviewed some time before in *The Daily Chronicle*, and his name was Austin Osman Spare. He was the boy-artist who had exhibited at the Royal Academy two years before, the South Kensington art-scholar and silver medallist – recommended to the school there by Sir William Richmond and Mr. Jackson, R.A. – a former designer of posters for Causton’s at the lordly salary of five shillings a week, and the juvenile author of one, and the illustrator of two, books which had attracted the attention of more than a single connoisseur. I saw those two books, confessed to a bewilderment, recalled incidentally certain works of such widely different artists as Michael Angelo and William Blake, and set out to meet the artist. And when he came to my house I was irresistibly reminded of the Angel in Mr. Wells’s *Wonderful Visit*. It needed no more than five minutes’ conversation to make me understand that he possessed what, for want of a better description, I must call the ‘odd’ point of view; he looked on life, and on the components of life, not as men usually look on them, but from a standpoint peculiarly his own. He was obviously one of those rare creatures possessed, like Socrates, of a daemon. Now a man with a daemon is a phenomenon very much to my liking, particularly when he happens to be an artist, because in that case he will draw not so much what he sees as what he thinks; and my visitor with the wonderful hair and the face of a Watts’ Knight – he has caricatured it hundreds of times in his work, sometimes, I suspect, for want of a model – had elected to entertain thoughts of the weirdest nature. I was not surprised to learn that he had long been enthusiastic over the mysteries of the East – Buddhism and its legends, Theosophy and its Mahatmas, Magic and its bevy of Enchanters, such as have fascinated the children of all generations and will fascinate them to the end of all time. He had, indeed, explored the strait passages which lead away from the Things of Men towards the Far Unknown. He had read and

dreamed of the occult and the diabolic, and, looking into his deep eyes, I wondered whether I would cast out my commonplace philosophy and begin to believe in reincarnation. We talked, I remember, of tortures and fairies, of tapestries and blood and were-wolfs, of magic and book-plates and religion, and after that I followed him round London for a sight of such works as he had sold.

The result of that journey was to assure me that the work was no less interesting than the boy. Both, to my mind, were startlingly new, and the suggestion of immaturity was by no means pronounced. I saw exactly what I had expected to see – a medley of Gargantuan figures in marvellously intricate compositions, wolf-men and devils, monstrous bird-men and soul-haunting trolls, fairies and magic and mist. There were headless bodies and bodiless heads, and over all the suggestion of such power as is rare in this age of correct and conventional work. For we are correct and conventional, even the most original of us, and a generation or two will have to pass before we have freed ourselves from the chain of superstition which is bound close about us from infancy. The work of this boy, however, seemed at first to be breaking most of the recognised canons, wherefore I rejoiced.

My personal inclination for the grotesque received full measure of satisfaction, yet I did not somehow gather that these black and white drawings and water-colour sketches altogether suggested the grotesque. I saw ‘deerskin-vested satyrs, crowned with ivy-twist, advance, and put strange pity in their horned countenance’ – but a satyr need not be merely grotesque. The work, however, explained the artist, which was exactly its purpose, and as I did not pretend to understand the artist, I was not in the least disappointed to find that I understood little of his work. Some of it provided me with a series of horrible reflections which were only dispelled at sight of a caricature of Mr Crooks, M.P. – a delightful sketch well worthy of publication – in Mr Pickford Waller’s collection, yet I was never reminded of Weirtz. Some of it was uncouth, some almost gross, but I was never repulsed; I only enjoyed – and wondered.

Earth Inferno by Austin Spare, p.29, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Miss Sketchley in her article had truly said that the form of Austin Spare’s art is a process, not a conclusion, and that he has been occupied in reproducing the figures of his imagination ‘almost without question or reason’ seems patent. By consequence, his drawings for the most part are filled with the ‘monstrous and morbid shapes’ to which the critic I have quoted draws attention. On the other hand, I do not know that I am prepared to admit with Miss Sketchley the ‘essential healthiness’ of the boy’s imaginative faculties. I do not say that they are unhealthy – I merely cavil at the critic’s choice of word. Here, indeed, one touches upon a question which has worried the critic for a century or more, and worried him, so far as I can see, to no purpose whatsoever. At all times health is difficult of explanation, but surely the healthy in art is altogether beyond definition. I dislike definitions at all times, perhaps because I am grossly unmathematical; but when it comes to the question of health – or the other thing – in art, I am cold to the most impassioned reply. I am certain that the work is himself, which is all I demand of him, and if, as I think, it occasionally suggests a superabundance of

cruelty, I, who hate cruelty, may be wroth, not with the work or the worker, but only with the Providence which has elected to produce minds of a torturing disposition. Austin Spare's work is natural because it is himself, but why it should be dubbed either healthy or the reverse, I do not know. Personally – were I wishful to speak vaguely – I should call it 'unhealthy' merely because it produces no purely normal reflections, but in that case I should have to define normal, and that in its turn would lead to a wordy paragraph which might satisfy a good many unscientific people, but would probably mean very little indeed. Art and health, however, are not, or should not be, in the least inter-dependent. Wherefore it will be superfluous to say more than that this strange boy's work must be taken to be the expression of an unusual personality gifted with a talent not yet wholly in proportion to its inventive powers – one can hardly wonder at this in view of the fact that he has had no more than a rudimentary and occasional training – but striving for no more than a faithful representation of its innermost self.

Here, perhaps, whilst on the question of health, it maybe permissible to quote from Austin Spare's own published words:

'Alas!' he writes, 'I am morbid,
And have put a purple colour about my brow.
All men seem eating and drinking the
"Joy of the Round Feast," while I am
Melancholy and silent, as though in a
Gloomy wood, astray.
Strange images of myself did I create,
As I gazed into the seeming pit of others,
Losing myself in the thoughtfulness
Of my unreal self, as humanity saw me.
But alas ! on entering to the consciousness
Of my real being to find fostering
-The all-prevailing woman,"
And I strayed with her, into the path direct.
"Hail! the Jewel in the Lotus,"

They are pregnant words for a boy of seventeen.

The two books please me least of all his work, but they might have been far better reproduced. Speaking of the first, *Earth Inferno*, Mr. James Guthrie calls it 'an elemental and chaotic thing, full of significant art, and of still more significant conception.' These words bear out my own opinion. He has suffered, and he has seen, and his sufferings have strangely, matured his mind. He is seer as well as artist, just as the great poets are also the great prophets.

There is an interesting preface, written by Mr. Guthrie, to the second of Austin Spare's publications, *A Book of Satyrs*. 'With the unflinching assurance of the optimist as to the ultimate,' he writes, '[Spare] treads with reforming energy where the effeminate and parsonic would whimper and weep helplessly. His is no gently advancing theory, but his

satires (or satyrs, as he loves to call them) arrive as full-fledged and assertive dogma.' Indeed he sees the sores and the humbugs and the pettinesses of life with a looming, fearless eye, and this perhaps is what Miss Sketchley had in mind when she wrote that the boy's art was healthy. In this book he has attempted in some measure to do with his pencil that which Zola did with his pen, with the difference that for the Frenchman's reality he has substituted a mystical realism – to use a rather awkward oxymoron – and he has crowded into some dozen cartoons the basis of a surprisingly mature philosophy. I do not know that I have ever seen so fierce an exposition of the sores of life crowded into so small a space. There is mysticism, but there is also stark truth. No one could possibly look upon the drawings without a shock or a shudder. 'In his art,' continues Mr. Guthrie, 'Spare continually achieves the unexpected; his pattern is always original, his characteristic line is of fine nervous quality, his types are powerfully visualised. The very subtle irony of his temper is apparent in a hundred whimsical ways – in attitudes, gestures, expressions too delicate to be more than contributory to the whole impression. This appropriate irony especially fits Spare for satire, and it is here [in *The Book of Satyrs*] to be seen and felt, for it can neither be disregarded nor forgotten – which words it is well to be able to write of one satirist in our day of curbed enthusiasm and polite art.' For my own part, I could at once recognise a drawing of Spare's and that in its way is a test of personality.

I have seen many hundreds of studies which this boy has made, and I can say with truth that I have never seen such magnificent composition. Even his earliest work shows the same brilliant invention although the actual workmanship is often weak. My dear friend Desmond Coke possesses a water-colour study entitled 'The Sacrifice', painted at the age of fifteen – it called forth no small eulogy from Watts himself – which to my mind is almost a marvel of artistic arrangement. The draughtsmanship is poor and halting, but there is in it the groundwork for a great picture, and great pictures are surprisingly few in number.

His best work is undoubtedly that in the Chinese black and white which were Beardsley's most successful media, yet in the few watercolours which I saw in Mr Pickford Waller's collection there is a wealth of colour, as might frighten the more timid and amaze the student, but which, like the drawings, cannot be ignored. In particular there are three unnamed pictures presumably relating to Eastern Magic which, in point alike of composition and colour, compare favourably with the far more highly finished work of some of the recognised masters. There is indeed a suggestion of that feast of colour which Brangwyn – himself, by the way, to be numbered amongst Spare's admirers – almost alone amongst our native painters can so successfully provide. Nor indeed has there been the smallest sign of a waning imagination. I do not think that in the years to come Austin Spare will be numbered amongst those who have degenerated into the correct painters beloved by the average philistine, nor do I suppose that he will ever feel inclined to paint that which the many might call beautiful. He will never become popular, unless circumstances impel him to undertake hackwork wherein his soul does not make its impression, but if his progress be unretarded, he will have to be numbered amongst the elect. It were useless to say that he still has much to learn, and it were as useless to point out that his knowledge of anatomy, while much

more than rudimentary, might scandalise the professors of that science, and I should be harking back to my trade of fiction were I to suggest that he had yet to become immured to that modicum of discipline which is necessary in every branch of art. There is indeed the germ of a discipline already apparent in his more finished work.

At the moment he is illustrating a book of poems by C.F. Grindrod and a work of his own, steadfastly experimenting in tempora, and he is ambitious to paint a few portraits which shall be “symbols of the persons,” in which connection I may mention that he has done a caricature of myself, which, whilst a “speaking” likeness, is undoubtedly the ugliest thing on God’s earth.

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Symbology in Aesthetics in Relation to the Art of Austin O. Spare
by Grace Rogers

First Published in Artwork, 1925

Among the many complexities that have transpired in the evolution of the present social order is the changing nature of artistic criteria and the more limited sphere of aesthetic service.

At one time art was the direct outcome of the needs of man for inter-relationship with forces governing his conditions, and indicative of strongly felt social emotions directed to functional service found the special channels for expression which handed down the ages the traditional form of dance, ritual, drama, architecture – the national heritage of mankind. But the relative values in life are changed. We are less simple and direct: language has become “a dictionary of faded metaphors,” art a process of ornament added to decay; symbols have lost their original significance and the fundamental basis of traditional is obscured. Thus is it commonly realised emotions have given place to arbitrary inhibitions and “modern complexes” and art became a specialised function forced to serve an individual aim, which frequently limited the artist to a “coterie” of appreciators. In these days it is said “art is the transmission to others of a special feeling experienced by the artist,” and though analysis might prove this to be equally true of any other period since art became individual in any sense of the word, yet it specially emphasises the need for change in the nature of our approach and acceptance. We, as spectators, are bound to participate in the individual vision and in the realisation of the aesthetic values which serve to convey the artist’s intention rather than the expression of ideas as apprehended by the mass in general.

Ambiguity must occur, however, in an age of transition and unfixed belief. In the search for new aesthetic foundations principles are employed as ends rather than less

obviously as means and much of the ultimate intention is frustrated or incomplete.

The language of the emotions expressed in arbitrary and unintelligible symbolism bewilders public and critic alike who are at a loss for some “aesthetic plumb-line” and the distance between the artist and the public perceptibly widens, for every picture cannot tell its story in terms of ideas associated with objects, although the general determination is it should. Moreover it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between the absurdity veiling incapacity and the honest experiment. We are fearful of “fancy tricks” and “pose,” blissfully unconscious we accept them every day in more discreet disguise.

Yet the truth is “one of the returns that haunt our civilisation and our art.” And in this return to Nature, even though it may take the form of more grotesque complexity, we again realise in art that condition allied to music itself, as rather an apprehension of conscious than rational representations, and it moves us similarly as the proportions and spaces of architecture (which Schopenhauer has aptly termed Frozen music), its harmonies manifest almost by some mathematical co-relation.

And as in the development of musical orchestration, a new factor was introduced through the divorce of the sounds from the words which had given a certain significance and shape which ed through the construction of musical composition upon tonality and rhythmic balance in statement, to the re-discovery of the principles which had been in existence from the beginning (which had their root and origin in the bodily movement of dance, the unqualified speech of the emotions that original “gesture” of mankind towards the forces conditioning his existence), thus in the same way it has come to be said of modern drawing, that its essence is a “dancing on paper” which exemplifies the artist’s ability to co-ordinate his ideas and emotional reactions, and like the Chinese draughtsmen of old – those past-masters in the art of linear expressiveness, “the strokes of his brush announce him in the nobility of his soul, or in its meanness and limitation.”

Personality then is the factor that counts; thus the secret of art lies with the artist himself and with Buffon we might say “le style, c’est l’homme.”

Grace Rogers by Austin O. Spare, 1927. Image copyright © Fulgur Limited

A cursory analysis of the elements of draughtsmanship could dismiss them briefly, linear and functional, the first concerning itself with the “calligraphic” property by which the artist expresses his dexterity and skill, while in the second the functional, the value lies in the expressiveness of the contour to clothe the inner form and which exists as the bounding of masses serving in the co-operation and co-ordination with other lines in the sense of part of living organic unity. But the term “line for line’s sake” which we might apply to the calligraphic “gesture” will have the virtue of line for form’s sake even though it may not fulfil the functional purpose of conveying the simplest and most effective resolution of a complex problem. We are told the Japanese “norm” of beauty lay in the curve of the letter S, which analysis might prove an abstract disposition of geometrical relations, the intellectual and emotional content of which lies buried as in a glyph and

pertains to abstract qualities which reason ultimately cuts out of the universe, again among abstruse problems of personality and psycho-analysis we are informed by a certain professor on art that in the observation of a beautiful curve "it is also possible that there will be an effect on glandular secretions, which will in turn intensify the striped muscles" which, however, we incline to dismiss as reduction ad absurdum, or merely the crude recognition of physical re-action implying obscure psychical and symbolic significance. None the less, to return to drawing itself, do we find the preoccupation with the possibilities of line implied in the functional purpose, which in the extract of the structural essentials as directed by the genius or idiosyncrasy of the artist and the realisation of a unified whole created by the co-relationship of parts, in virtue of rhythmic movement or gesture becomes significant form.

And we are here confronted with the problem of what is "significant" form (another mis-used term), also with what have hitherto been termed peculiar divergences of the art known as E. and W. – (distinctions now being rapidly swept aside) but which for argument's sake consist in the latter case, the preoccupation with problems of rendering the human form in three dimensions and the study of sequences of lines and masses necessary to hold groups or objects in recessive design, the two ultimate results being the idea of pure form, or that careful imitation of nature, where the importance bestowed to each particular detail ultimately tends towards the diminution of a sense of synthesised whole and to produce the effect of mere juxtaposed facts, while the other tendency has been toward the subservience of detail to the whole, as in the application of fact to functional end; Indian art overwhelmingly rich in detail is enclosed in rhythmic volume. In this way "the realisation of form is not merely a visual experience but rather the ultimate product of memory and imagination in which the basic element of composition is served in the establishment of definite relations between formal perceptions through which disparate elements can comprise an organic unity which has no existence in nature and is entirely arbitrary." The ultimate success lies in the harmonious relationship of the variety of elements. This quality may apply to results achieved through pictorial representations as to abstract design, and here the general tendency is to confuse the issues. It is too obvious that some idea lies behind distortion, or the emptiest resolution of a problem of rhythm, or the abstract geometrical solution, but in the drawings of Austin Spare the principles are exemplified by certain traditional means, and the natural impulse is to attract to the elements of symbolism more of the values attached to actual objects. But although there may be elements of the conscious in his work, the fact is rather in common with the greater draughtsman of the past, where we discover the similar and unceasing search for the grasp of structural principles and convention is indirectly served and continually reinforced by an intimate knowledge of Nature.

Therefore the problem is with Austin Spare as with the Chinese, not the actual application of abstract principles of design but arriving at an epitomised statement, the design or composition realised rather in the inherent nature of the matter itself, which from consummate mastery of the medium allies itself with the commentary sense of movement – as in the sense of rhythm impressing material things.

Thus if we come to the analogy of the rhythmical movements of the body where the expressiveness and power lies in the co-related order, and to the realisation that those precise aesthetic qualities we discover are not bound in the formal relation but by the fusing secret in the nature of the emotional re-action which directs the artist to selection, and pertaining to consciousness, unites the precise relationship of beauty with truth as subjective and psychological, being the harmonious occupation of consciousness with aesthetic impression, and becomes the natural functioning of the mind itself. Aesthetically then, the line functionality expresses the psychological content through which idea becomes implicit in the form. Thus, the fact that though the symbol is clear or the emotions transcribed seems ever a matter of conjecture, yet the artist seeks ever to make constructions consistent and self-contained which appear to have ultimate value in themselves.

Apart from this, however, art which is more directly expressive of the individual and obviously social emotions, which implies the retention of memory images and the re-expression of them as symbols clothed in analogous form, demands what a certain critic in considering these drawings of Austin Spare's at a recent exhibition at St. George Gallery described as occult initiation. Meaning (interpreting the term in his way), the power to translate ideas into terms of value attached to actual life. Yet, with all our knowledge of the abstruse problems of psycho-analysis, the discovery of the sublimated wish to kill our father and marry our grandmother is not furthering an appreciation of art as art.

Mainly in the drawings of Austin Spare we discover the ideals which inspired the finest of linear artists, and the final aim is to incorporate as the principles, which are manifest through the conditions, rather than in the nature of the material employed, which invests him with the capacity, without recourse to symbol, to transcribe fact to idea. Therefore we see more than the object represented, something which arrests and profoundly moves us, even if it were by the exquisite power with which he (to quote again) "alternates those essays in pure classicism with hideous deformities" and which, by virtue of ART cease to be deformities.

For, as he himself has said, "Art is that beauty which may be born of anything; but not by a formula of balance and proportion, beauty itself"; and again, "Ugliness is that which the formula does not allow: hence there is never beauty without this ugliness which becomes transmitted by its super-abundance." This is nearer the realisation of the aesthetic values of the "harmony of opposites" or the "union of contraries," which is the "free belief" of art and conditions of "vital allegory."

Grace Rogers by Austin O. Spare, 1927 (Detail) Image copyright © Fulgur Limited

Yet again as someone has put it, "every artist who carries furthest his own innermost feelings, and poignantly reveals the intimate impulses of mankind, shocks us as manifest revelations of ourselves." We are affright, as confronted with the scalpel exposed to our disease. For truly are we ever governed by the "complexes" of morality and move continually toward a dream world wherein the ideal balance of mind and

matter is stamped with the nature of our evasions. We look to art for mere moments of beauty, modes of escape from reality, achieved by sense of annihilation, which implies too vividly the need for stimulant or sedatives – as Nietzsche puts it, “to make life possible.” Yet art has no necessary concern with medicine and morals, though art can be employed in anything, in what are called unholy as more holy means invested with the grace of art – that consumer of antipathies. The “initiate” in this case is he who can accept his grace seasoned with salt. For has not Emerson, in describing the sceptic, acknowledged him, the mystic, who, unafraid to tread the vestibule of the temple, discovers in the Mount of Vision the beautitude is partial and deformed! With such an eye of inward vision did that other philosopher lament:

“I see and have seen worse things; divers things so hideous that I should neither speak of all matters nor even to keep silent about some of them, namely, men who lack everything excepting they have too much of one thing; men who are nothing more than a big eye, a big mouth; or something else big. Reversed cripples I call such men.”

“We are such stuff as dreams are made of.”

Inadequate expression, conglomeration of half-realised experiences – monsters and mutilated fragments. Mediaeval times more picturesque less squeamish, combined the head of dog and serpent’s tail, angels and devils interchange confidence in that grotesquely unsophisticated intermixture of objectivity and subjectivity. Yet whatever the symbols, the function of art remains, the expression of an eternal verity, which, as in the art of Austin Spare, records a disinterested state of mind as the setting free of a disembodied function of the spirit.

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About this capture

Fulgur Limited Publishers

Pictures of the Occult by a Psychical Artist

First published in The Sphere, 1927

A selection of the extraordinary work of Mr. Austin O. Spare, who renounced material success in Mayfair to immerse himself in the slums of the Borough in the study of magic and the Occult. These pictures, the result of his researches into the hinterland of the soul, are now on exhibition at the St. Georges Gallery.

Satyr by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Steeped in mysticism and the study of ancient magic, Mr Austin O. Spare, once hailed as an infant prodigy, whose work was hung at the Royal Academy when he was only fourteen years of age, is now holding an exhibition at the St. George's Gallery, George Street, Hanover Square.

His work is comparable in its nightmare conception with Dore and in its delicacy to the later manner of Aubrey Beardsley: but although he deals with his subjects from an allegorical point of view, he has neither the brutality of the great illustrator of the Bible, nor the bitter cynicism of the decadent.

Dream Phantasmagoria by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

To his mind, filled as it is with the lore of religions, almost now forgotten, the Borough, where he dwells in penury, is peopled with the beings of the woodland of ancient Greece, the Satyr band attendant on the great god Pan.

These beings, whose name has become a synonym for lust, live, maintains Spare, in their horned horror in the drab streets south of London Bridge. The ribaldry and coarse revelry of the slums is due to the influence of these beings of the Borderland, he believes – and he has materialised them on his canvases.

Some of his work is executed with the faery lightness of silverpoint while other examples are in colour. Certain pictures, such as the “Dream Phantasmagoria” reproduced above, were directly inspired by spirit control, perhaps the first automatic artistry that is the work of one who is both an automatist and an artist.

The Fallen by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Too many spirit drawings in the past lacked the technique that renders at least semi-intelligible to the non-elect work of Mr. Spare. The artist believes that much great work – Hamlet for example – was created under psychical impulse, and even when not “automatising,” he ascribes a spirit direction to his brush.

Mr. Spare, who served through four years of the War, is the son of a City policeman and is a skilled worker in stained glass. He utilises self-hypnotism on occasion to stimulate his production and to direct his work, but his hand has been uninspired for as long as three months at a time.

Despite the easy criticism that such work is the outcome of a brain possibly affected by the character of his studies, possibly transcending that of the average, the innate beauty of Mr. Spare’s art sets this exhibition on a level of its own.

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Sex in Art

by Clifford Bax

First published in Ideas and People, 1936

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When we met at a Lyons teashop I recognised at once what an odd and charming person he is. I liked his brawny build and the thick tough strength of his hair. I noticed that he was pallid, and wondered if the air and the food of The Borough were good for him. I noticed and liked his pale eyes which were always honest and often humorous. I realised at once that he was a shrewd though unworldly fellow who knew many aspects of London life which I had known only by hearsay.

Clifford Bax by Austin Spare, 1953. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

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Nevertheless, I am glad that we launched it because the duties of co-editorship brought Austin Spare quite frequently from his tenement-flat in The Borough to a thin and tower-like house in St. Petersburg Place whither I had recently moved. Now, a man may change his place of abode without much annoying his friends; but if he also decides to change his mode of life, they will find him hard to forgive. And that is what I had done. Having lived for eight years in a studio, cooking my breakfast while I had my bath, and feeding for the most part upon tinned food, and resenting any occasion upon which I should have to wear evening-dress, what did I now do but rent an elegant house, employ a butler and change every night into a dinner-suit? And as though all this were not sufficiently disconcerting, I had the inconsiderateness to grow (with how much trepidation) a moustache and a small beard. People do not like us to change. They deplore these minute revolutions in the life of anyone whom they know well: but I had realised that a bohemian existence in only one suit of clothes may well be enough when a man is thirty but that when he approaching forty it may become a little ridiculous.

Spare knew the taste of life as it is for people to whom a penny and a ha'penny are very different coins, and he lived in a high bleak barrack-like tenement-block, among men and women in whose life elegance and the arts had no place, and surrounded by their washing and their cats. He said to me once "Don't put 'esquire' on your letters. We've only one other esquire in my block, and they think we're giving ourselves airs." His attractive simplicity came out, too, when he said "If you are ever passing my place, do drop in"; for it is seldom that anybody happens to be passing The Borough unless he lives there.

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"If you are fond of animals" he remarked at lunch, "don't come to live in The Borough. The other day some kids threw a cat from a top window to the stone yard below. I had it poisoned." Norah and I, brought up in a kindlier world preserved our British phlegm, "I hate brutality" he went on, "and what with wife-beating and cat-booting, it's all around you in The Borough. I've got a white tabby now - a stray - but she has an ugly wound on her mouth. As a matter of fact, only a few yards from my place there's a little court which everyone there calls 'Catkiller's Alley'. If you go there you quite often see a cat slinking about with no fur on."

"No fur?" cried Norah. "What do you mean?"

"Oh," said Spare, perhaps pitying our innocence, "the men pull the fur off, give the cat a clout on the head, and don't wait to see if they've finished her off or not."

Norah said "Don't you ever interfere?" and then added, with imagination, "I suppose it's too dangerous?"

"Dangerous?" laughed Spare. "There's no danger. All those chaps are cowards. Of course, it's easy enough to be philosophical, to leave life as it is: but we're human beings first and philosophers afterwards. Now and again I do take a hand. The other morning I was in bed when the milk-boy arrived. I heard a howl, and I knew what was happening: so I jumped out of bed and of course I found the boy booting the white tabby. Didn't I just give him a hiding!"

Then, recollecting his philosophy, he observed "Perhaps it is all of no use. What happens down here doesn't correspond with what's happening in the Real World. When I saved the tabby I may have killed four archangels; and it may have been God who was using that boy."

Austin Spare c.1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Becoming more involved within the folds of metaphysics, he expounded a theory that a man's conditions are caused by his subconscious desires. The subconscious mind, being all-wise (he told us), wills the environment that shall strengthen the weak places of the soul: and he commented with a smile, "I suppose my own subconscious desire is to be poor! Whatever you really want, you can get. The want rises first in the conscious mind, but you have to make the subconscious desire it too. And you can do this by inventing a symbol of the thing you want, - wealth, a woman, fame or a country cottage, it's all alike. The symbol drops down into the subconscious. You have to forget all about it. In fact, you must play at hide-and-seek with yourself. And while you're wanting that particular thing or person, you must resolutely starve all your lesser desires. By doing that, you make the whole self, conscious and subconscious, flow toward you main object. And you'll obtain it."

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Poor Painter with Cats
First published in The Leader magazine, 1948

Keeping alive the romantic tradition that painters ought to live in extreme discomfort, somewhere near starvation level, is Austin Osman Spare, who has just held an exhibition at London's Archer gallery, with over 150 studies in "Psycho-Physiognomy" and, to quote his catalogue, "an admixture of spivs, ghosts, hoboes, layabouts, fiddlers and others."

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

Austin Osman Spare, a policeman's son, once looked like being a fashionable painter. But Mr Spare decided to paint in London's Elephant and Castle, choosing as models the ordinary people of Lambeth. He rarely charged more than £5 each for them, but they became collector's pieces.

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

In 1941, fire and high explosive totally obliterated his studio flat, depriving him of his home, his health and his equipment. For three years he struggled to regain the use of his arms and now at last his work is on view again, paintings which he has done in the cramped basement in Brixton where he now lives with eight or nine cats as company. This studio flat is a mass of litter, the artist himself works in an old Army shirt and tattered jacket. He has no bed. But he still charges an average of £5 per picture.

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

Spare's hobby is the occult. "By turning my head involuntarily" he announces, "I can always see my alter ego, familiars or the gang of elementals that partly constitute my being."

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Magicians in London: A Recollection

by Oswald Blakeston

This extract was first published in The Uncertain Element, [1950]

And it was in London, and not in Istanbul, that I met my best black magician. People

had told me about him. They said: "He's an old man now, but his hair is still dark and wild. He lives in a tenement. You'd never dream what a lot of magic is still practised there. Why! He can remember when there was a cage of skinned live cats on exhibition in the street, and there was a boy who bit the heads of live rats for a sixpence. It's atmosphere, isn't it?"

Well, there was a strange little card on his mantelpiece. I asked him about it. "That!" he shrugged his shoulders. "That's nothing much. Just a sigil to make it hail tomorrow."

I did the unforgivable thing. In spite of the atmosphere, I said, "Will it?"

"Umph!" he said reproachfully, of course it does depend on "interferences" by others black magicians." His face brightened. "Once," he said, "I put a card up to make it rain. I had to make some days before my influence was sufficiently established to counteract the wishes of others magicians. But when it did rain, my card was so strong I could not get it to stop.

"I said, "That's all right, I've proved my point." I burnt my card and willed the rain to cease. But I had underrated my own power. I had to will for days before the rain actually stopped. Think of that!"

I thought about it, and he watched me with burning eyes to see if I was impressed.

He said: "Have you a match? I used to light cigarettes without matches, but I found it wasted so much power. I must keep my power for the really big things. For instance, I made the mistake of trifling with horses.

Oswell Blakeston by Austin Spare, 1933. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

"I once drew a special pack of cards to tell me the winner. A magic pack of cards. If there were a dozen horses in the race, I laid out thirty cards and concentrated to make the pack tell me the thirtieth horse. That forced my conscious mind to give up, and brought my unconscious into play.

"Well, for a bit I couldn't understand what was wrong. I didn't seem to be making any money. But then it came to me. My magic was right but – the judges were wrong.

"Judges are fallible human beings, you know, and they make errors about the horses and the tape. My magic could only tell me the horse that really won, not the horse which deceived the judges. Of course, this was in the days before the photo-finish.

"But, you see" it doesn't do to trifle."

He leapt to his feet. "I'll show you something," he cried wildly, "I'll show you something."

He picked up a rusty biscuit tin. I wondered if he was going to produce a dried toad or a

dead baby. He took out a piece of cheese. Then, with a pocket knife, he delicately removed some pairings.

“For D.P.’s lunch,” he said, as he dropped the shavings outside a mousehole. “I call him D.P.,” he added; “it’s short for Death Posture.”

“Is he your familiar?” I suggested.

“He is,” the black magician boasted, “the most amazing mouse in London.”

We sat watching the hole. I didn’t know whether I was expected to will anything, so I tried to fill my mind with cheese.

Presently a mouse peered, sniffed, darted forward, gobbled the cheese, retreated.

“There!” shouted the black magician in triumph, “that was D.P. You see I keep a tame mouse instead of a cat. He relies on the lunch I give him, and so he’s jealous of his food he won’t allow another mouse near the place.”

“Yes,” I conceded, “that certainly is magic, But,” I went on as a doubt occurred to me, “would you call it black?”

He despaired of me. “I’ll have to ask you to go,” he said crossly. “There is an inner rite I must perform. But before you go, I wonder if you’d mind giving me a hand to rig up this box camera?”

“Elementals, you know, walk in straight lines. You must know that – the Chinese knew it millions of years ago. Well, there’s a demon due to haunt my room tonight. But no elemental can bear to have his photograph taken. That only happens under the pentagram of compulsion. When my haunt sees the camera he’ll automatically turn round. Then he’ll have to walk in a straight line all round the earth before he can get back to my room. It ought to keep him quiet for a bit.”

I did my best to help with the camera, and as I was about to leave the black magician relented.

“Come back one day,” he invited, “and I’ll show you all your future in a vision on the wall. You’ll like that, won’t you? All your future spread out like a map before you”. Yes, do come back. I think D.P. has taken a fancy to you.”

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Obituary

First published in The Times, May 16th 1956

Austin Osman Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1952.

Austin Spare, an artist of unusual gifts and attainments and even more unusual personality, died on 15th May 1956, in hospital in London at the age of sixty-nine.

A dreamer of dreams and seer of visions, he had that complete other-worldliness so often depicted in romantic fiction and so rarely found in real life. Money meant nothing to him. With his talents as a figure draughtsman he might easily have commanded a four-figure income in portraiture, but he elected to live quietly and humbly, rarely going out, painting what he wished to paint, and selling his works at three or four guineas each. Even in outward aspect he conformed to type – with his untidy shock of hair, small imperial, and a scarf instead of a collar. But for most of his life he did not mix in what are called “artistic circles”. Not Chelsea, Fitzroy Street, Bloomsbury or Hampstead claimed him, but for years a little flat “in the south suburbs of the Elephant”, far removed from the coteries, deep-set in the ordinary life of the people.

Austin Osman Spare was born in Snow Hill, near Smithfield Market, London on 31st December 1886, the son of Philip Newton Spare, a City of London policeman. Leaving his elementary school at the age of 13, he took his higher education into his own hands, working not only at art but at general subjects, in particular the occult. He had some formal tuition at the Lambeth School of Art and the Royal College of Art. He was already exhibiting at the Royal Academy at the age of 16, but in later years ceased to send anything there. In July 1914 he had his first one-man exhibition, at the Baillie Gallery, showing a number of his so-called “psychic” drawings and some very powerful generalizations of animal nature.

Just after the 1914-1918 war Spare became friendly with John Austen and Alan Odle, figure draughtsmen differing considerably from him and from each other, but each having certain aims in common with his. From October 1922 to July 1924 Spare edited, jointly with Clifford Bax, a sumptuously produced quarterly called *The Golden Hind* for Chapman and Hall. It collapsed for lack of support, but during its brief career it reproduced large scale some really superb figure drawings and lithographs by Spare and others. In 1925 Spare, Odle, Austen and Harry Clarke showed together at the St. George's Gallery. Two years later Spare showed alone, at the Lefevre Galleries, and in 1930, at the Godfrey Phillips Galleries.

Thereafter Spare was rarely found in the purlieu of Bond Street. He would teach a little from January to June, then up to the end of October, would finish various works, and from the beginning of November to Christmas would hang his products in the living-room, bedroom, and kitchen of his flat in the Borough. There he kept open house; critics and purchasers would go down, ring the bell, be admitted, and inspect the pictures, often in the company of some of the models – working women of the neighbourhood. Spare was convinced that there was a great potential demand for

pictures at two or three guineas each, and condemned the practice of asking £20 for “amateurish stuff”. He worked chiefly in pastel or pencil, drawing rapidly, often taking no more than two hours over a picture. He was especially interested in delineating the old, and had various models over seventy and one as old as ninety-three.

During the last war, while on fire watching duty, he was blown up and temporarily lost the use of both arms. His memory was also affected, but in 1946 in a cramped basement in Brixton, he began to make pictures again, starting, as he said, from scratch. In 1947 an exhibition of no less than 163 of the pictures he had painted in the previous few months attracted many people to the Archer Gallery, in Westbourne Grove.

Spare’s alleged “automatic” and “psychic” drawings tended to lack discipline and were on the whole inferior to his “straight” work. The last chiefly comprised nudes, which combined strength and delicacy of a high order and had a wonderful three-dimensional feeling. His minute draughtsmanship may have owed something to the Pre-Raphaelite influence, though in general his art was much more human and full-blooded than that of the “brethren”. Of his technical mastery there can be no doubt. The collection of his drawings may yet become a cult.

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Austin Osman Spare 1886-1956

by Haydn Mackay

Radio script, 1956

There has just died here in London an artist who, though little known to the vast general public, has long been deemed by artists to be one of the most remarkable draughtsmen of his time. I am referring to Austin Osman Spare, who at the age of sixty-nine years departs this world, leaving behind the evidence and influence of his great achievements. Great achievements, whether we regard the superlative craftsmanship of his drawings and pastel paintings; the insight apparent in his writings; the profundity of his speculative incursions in psychology, magic, the Occult and automatic suggestion, or regard only one such aspect of this many-sided-artist.

To in any way adequately describe the work of the artist Spare to an audience unfamiliar with some examples of it is an insuperable problem, for he falls into none of the well-known categories. His normal way of life was that of a visionary obviously impervious to any worldly deficiencies of his material existence; completely indifferent to all the usual urges of self or profit; (money was but the necessary "tram-ticket" that entitled him to conveyance from halt to halt in penurious journeys of travail); Content

with the most modest existence in circumstances of frequently material discomfort and to any but Spare, quite inadequate equipment for the purposes in view. Had he been other-wise a very large income as a portraitist was ever within his reach, but he avoided or ignored all such commissions; that he might paint only that to which his vision urged him; and for which he only asked the most ridiculously modest prices.

Spare first exhibited at the Royal Academy at the early age of sixteen. Later he had exhibitions in Bond Street and the galleries of the wealthy; but in still later years he abandoned showing work in any conditions but those of his own devising. And this brings us to Spare's early environment and the later choice of neighbourhood in which to live and which was to supply him with the models and inspiration of much of his work.

He was born, the son of a city policeman, in the City of London, at the end of the 1880's, when the solemn pomp and stilted circumstance of the latter years of Queen Victoria's reign became pregnant with revolutionary expressions in the Arts and was thus doomed to lose its middle-class reputation in the "naughty nineties". Sham Gothic medievalism, hack Renaissance idioms, or decayed Romanticism, were to be ousted by a cynical, vicious, and decadent reaction to the respectabilities of the conventional, but pharisaical, Arts of a lingering Puritanism.

The grotesque and jewelled decadence of the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley opposed the anaemic religiosity of the Burne-Jones cult; the preciousness of the painter Whistler and the writer Oscar Wilde and the affected Pagan elegance of their satellites, the "Aesthetes", opposed the Academic; And the manner of the Baroque swirls and blobs of intricate ornament appearing in the sculpture designs of Alfred Gilbert, heralded the rise of "L'Art Nouveau"; That fashion which grew like a scandal, and swept like a plague, through the studios of all Western Europe, in the opening years of the 20th Century.

Such was the Art atmosphere that greeted Spare, with his precocious talents, at a most impressionable and tender age. It had its effect in influencing his early work, but with his timely maturity he rapidly developed and outlived it, to evolve an original, individual and distinct expression, firmly based on the great historic traditions of Western Europe drawing; and the best examples of his figure drawing are unsurpassed by any draughtsman of our period. In the sincerity, profundity, the dexterity of his drawing he immediately became conspicuous, and it is this quality, amongst all his many qualities, that most triumphantly justifies all the strange productions of his adventurous, rambling and eternally questing spirit.

And strange indeed was much of his work, for he was early in touch with the esoteric thought of the period, visionary, occult, magic, with which he somehow seemed to bring a precise, stark, and awful significance to the drawing of the most natural object that appeared in his design. Like all truly imaginative work, there was no reliance on a mere vagueness of statement for unknowable mysteries, but rather on an excessive reality given to the incredible. A definition of form, a sharpness of focus, a semblance of textures, that produced the crisp shock of sudden and unpredicted vision; A hidden world suddenly revealed in the glare of a powerful search-light. In the verity of his

visionary productions we find him of the company of Blake and Fuseli and their circle, but far superior to any of them in the mastery of representational craft. The English "Pre-Raphaelites" have been suggested as an influence, in view of Spare's meticulous detail; but I cannot accept that view. He is much more akin to Durer in the engravings and Holbein in the drawing. What is most apparent and of the very essence of Spare's work is the all-pervading unity of arrangement, of tone, of texture, that is quite alien to the "Pre-Raphaelite" practice.

Spare had some formal training at the Lambeth School of Art and at the Royal College of Art; and brief as was his stay at the Royal College, he has become something of a legend amongst R.C.A students; and many are the artists who have acquired examples of his work. The only mention I ever heard him make of his R.C.A. experience was when he told me that during his period there he had to appear for some small rebellion and with a fellow student before the Board of Education in Whitehall. The most impressive memory he retained of that interview was of a group of very solemn old gentlemen gathered at one end of the longest table he'd ever conceived as possible, even in a dream. An enormous table that stretched in a vast perspective from the end at which, meek and lowly, he and his fellow delinquent stood. The effect of that huge table was all that he seemed to regard as of any significant interest. What decisions were arrived at, affecting his conduct, career or prospects, on that solemn occasion I never learnt from him. The whole incident, apart from the colossal table, had long been dismissed from his mind.

I first came across work by Spare nearly half a century ago, but only came into contact with his extraordinary personality at the close of the First World War. And though I have seen much of him and his work since he still appears in my memory as the impression he made on me at that first meeting. A pair of appraising eyes set in a pale face; surmounted by a great shock of dun-coloured hair. Too intent on his dedication to be other than careless of mundane appearances or circumstances, he was a slim figure with loose but energetic gait. He was aloof and shy with strangers, especially those who might be deemed to have some social or conventional importance. This, combined with the constant urge of his work, made him something of a recluse. He had a satirical humour, but appeared incapable of personal malice or jealousy or greed. In common with most of those dedicated beings whose persistent and controlling activity is creative work, the essential solitude to such individual endeavour invariably appears to an observer as an uneventful life and lacking in incident. But the work shows the adventures, the excitements survived, the travelling done in that strangest of all the unexplored countries of the mind by such courageous pioneers as was Austin Osman Spare as he mapped his territories of sensation, desire and creative will.

Whilst the greater mass of his work consists of figure drawings and compositions of occult, "psychic" and dream fantasies, he also published various books of drawings, as *Earth Inferno*, and *A Book of Satyrs*; also certain occult and symbolic drawings and writings, such as *The Book of Pleasure* and *The Focus of Life*. He also edited with the poet and "supertramp" W.H.Davies a sumptuous publication *Form*, and with Mr Clifford Bax, a quarterly, *The Golden Hind*; to each of which he was a principal contributor. He

also produced a few etchings and lithographs. Mainly he worked in pen, pencil or pastel, but rarely turning to other media.

Spare's automatic or psychic drawings may appear as undisciplined and abstruse; as all such drawings, of their very nature, must appear to be; as also is the case with much of his esoteric writings. But there can be no shadow of doubt regarding the technical mastery of his expression in the figures and the various accessories; animal, vegetable or mineral; mythical or mundane, which ornament and crowd so many of his compositions. He was an exceedingly rapid worker, frequently producing a picture with no more than a couple of hours work; and rhythmic ornament grew from his hand seemingly without conscious effort.

For his nudes he seldom employed professional models, declaring that they were too mannered by art-school practice; and for his portrait drawings, he found his types in the streets of his neighbourhood – the historic but unfashionable Borough of Southwark where for the greater part he had lived and worked. It is a poor over-crowded neighbourhood south of the river and sheltering a most characteristically "Cockney" population; costers and barrow-boys, bruisers and barmen, hucksters and higglers and their women folk, all in their appropriate settings of tenement dwellings; of street markets, and "gin palaces". In these portrait pastels he developed a realism that, whilst still a vital portrait, was yet something more. A searching commentary on type, a meticulous localisation of the individual in the type, a history and a prophecy read from, and into, the forms and features of a head. A collection of these pastel portraits should be publicly owned as a national treasure and housed in one of the London Galleries. As a native of the City, surely the City Guild Hall Art Gallery would be a most appropriate place, as being of such importance to the age and nation as are, to France, the pre-Revolutionary portraits by that great 18th Century pastelist, Quentin de la Tour. The Windsor collection of Holbein drawings deal faithfully with personalities at Henry VIII's Court; Spare's pastels deal equally faithfully with a vastly different, hitherto slighted, but less narrow strata, of our ever-changing urban communities. As human records of human beings, such works are profitable to human understanding. In this "Age of Common Man" the portraiture of an elite is not the only record worthy of preservation.

In 1918 I found Spare in the Army, he had been placed in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and with the rank of Sergeant, was employed in making drawings for the medical history of the war. Thus was acquired a collection of somewhat perfunctory, but technically impeccable drawings, now in the possession of the authorities. He worked in the solitude of a studio provided by the army, and the only military convention to which he had to conform was the wearing of the uniform; and I have never seen a queerer figure in a soldier's garb. He wore the most dilapidated uniform I have seen outside a refuse dump, and it was worn in the most negligent manner conceivable. It is not surprising that on occasion he was held by the police as a rogue wearing unauthorised badges and uniform, and only released by them on a statement of his authenticity by his commanding officer.

It was in Spare's company that I met the poet W.H. Davies (The Super-Tramp), when

they together came to see me to invite me to contribute a drawing or two to the quarterly they were jointly editing. They made an amusing pair, and when we adjourned to a local tavern for lunch, they proved most entertaining conversationalists, with much in common regarding their general outlook on life and human society: a horror of gentile pretensions, of official snobbery, of artistic cliques. But beyond that they parted – Davies, the Welshman, yearned to flee the town and tread the open roads, rest in bosky dells, muse on birdsong or the patient cattle grazing that taught their lesson, whilst Spare, the Cockney, loved the grey city of his birth, and its poorer neighbourhoods and their populace, which fed his humour, his excitement, his profound sense of man's geocentricity in an ever menacing circumstantial existence, of the soul in a gutter of life, and of creative desire entombed in the flesh.

I find it difficult to talk simply of Spare, the man. I think it must be so to anyone who knew him; for in his case a knowledge of the artist so heavily overshadows the simple man. He was normally so retiring, always seeming to protectively efface himself by an assimilation, both in careless attire and Cockney bearing, of the habit and vernacular of his poor neighbours and unprofessional models.

His compositions of magic or occult purpose always bore an air of antiquity. The actual drawings themselves seeming ancient and as being a timeless work rescued from a long past; and dealing with a primordial world of distant memory: The work of the universal "ID" of Freud's psychological system, rather than that of a conscious will. They emphasise no deistic transcendence, but the urge of the senses, the animating dust, and the universal lust of earth-bound sensibility. A brooding inevitability, even in their eccentricities and distortions, informed all, despite the nightmarish incongruities which haunt them.

That a genuine automatism played a greater part in Spare's work than is to be found in that of any of his contemporaries, is, I think, beyond doubt. And whatever there is to be said for "Surrealist" theories, their most effective expression is to be found in his works. Spare was the first, and I think by far the most convincing "Surrealist" of our times. He did not produce haphazard merely frivolous incongruities for their own sake; for that is not the main characteristics of dreams. Dreams are mainly vivid emblems serving desire or distress. And in the dreams of Spare, desire and distress were eternal and evolutionary, in atavistic resurgence, life succeeding life, self-creating self, and whatever may be deemed of such ideas, they are at least presented by a compelling beauty of craftsmanship.

A really representative selection of Spare's works should certainly, and long since, have been made and acquired for the national collections. But so far as I know, there is only a very early work in the British Museum, a couple of drawings of minor importance in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and one in the National Museum of Wales. Probably the opportunity to acquire typical works by the inspired Londoner at the extremely modest prices Spare was content to ask is now past. The Directors (as the one-time Curators are now styled!) of our public galleries do not seem to have considered the desirability of acquiring representative works by one of the subtlest, searching and

profound of our draughtsmen. One who has consistently pursued throughout a lifetime of frequent perplexity and pain, the course of his obvious and curious dedication, quite irrespective of any professional or social profit. Can it really be true that all the opinions of professional contemporaries are worthless? Such of Spare's early days, as those of G.F.Watts, O.M., John Singer Sargent, R.A., Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.A., Rickets and Shannon and a host of other distinguished artists regarding Spare's precocity, and to-day of almost every traditionally competent artist familiar with his mature work? How comes it about that our galleries can afford thousands of pounds for what so many of the profession consider inferior examples of stranger contemporary artists, but could not find a fiver for a Spare during the lifetime of this professionally acclaimed "Cockney" artist whose life of dedication from the cradle to the grave, was spent within a mile or two of our great London galleries and museums.

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Spare Parts

by Ramsey Dukes

First published in Agapé, 1975

The following article is an introduction to Spare's Book of Pleasure. It was written as an appendix to the unpublished Uncle Ramsey's Bumper Book of Magick Spells, then first published in issue four of the occult magazine Agapé in the early 1970s, and then in a slightly modified form for The Sorcerer's Apprentice edition of The Collected Works of Austin Osman Spare with a postscript added to the original version. The essay was long considered to be the best available introduction to Spare's magical theories.

The article summarises The Book of Pleasure, helping the reader to find their own way through Spare's rather difficult prose. It also draws some parallels with other helpful texts. For a more detailed account of practical work with sigils etc I recommend two excellent books; Pete Carroll's Liber Null and Ray Sherwin's Book of Results. [Since writing this there have been several other books on the subject.]

(i)

"On the brink of mystery, the spirit of man is seized with giddiness" thus wrote Eliphas Levi in the Key of the Mysteries. Indeed we cannot live forever in a state of giddiness and so need to hide that brink behind veils. By the very decision to give a name or symbol to the Ultimate (e.g. God, Nothing, Tao) we save ourselves from having to see it face to face; the first veil is put up.

The philosophical system that is easiest to grasp, and the easiest to ridicule, is the one that has the most veils. For example the extreme simplicity of Zen Buddhism makes it less easy to discuss than the complex spiritual hierarchies of some other religions. In this sense Spare's philosophy uses comparatively few veils and this, together with his obscure way of writing, make it difficult to describe his ideas adequately.

For example: a basic theme of his writing is that we are not free, we are the slaves of our beliefs and conventions. This is quite obviously the case when we look at other people. We can laugh at the debutante who sorrowfully cries "Oh Mummy I CAN'T wear the same dress that I wore to Margie's party"; but alas the poor girl is right, she really can't! Consider also the novice soldier who for the first time is asked to kill a man in defence of his country; as he aims the rifle he is in no position of authority, instead he himself is a battlefield on which Patriotism is struggling with the commandment 'thou shalt not kill'. Perhaps the clearest example of all is witnessed by the outsider when he sees a family squabbling, struggling in a net of strong interpersonal feelings which are meaningless to the uninvolved...

In each case the truth of Spare's statement is totally obvious and yet the PRACTICAL use of it flounders when we try to see our own actions in this light. This 'simple' turning inward of our gaze is in fact a basic problem of all applied psychology; and it is such difficulties (rather than the trouble of finding the tongue of a hanged man or the eye of a newt) which the student of Spare's magic will encounter.

Instead of forming our own plan we will turn over the pages of The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love) the Psychology of Ecstasy, and outline Spare's system in the same sequence as he adopted.

(ii)

He starts with 'Definitions':

The Words God, religions, faith, morals, woman etc. (they being forms of belief) are used as expressing different "means" as controlling and expressing desire: an idea of unity by fear in some form or another which must spell bondage – the imagined limits; extended by science which adds a dearly paid inch to our height, no more.

Kia

The absolute freedom which being free is mighty enough to be "reality" and free at any time: therefore is it not potential or manifest (except as its instant possibility) by ideas of freedom or "means", but by the Ego being free to receive it. The less said of it (Kia) the less obscure it is. Remember evolution teaches by terrible punishments – that conception is ultimate reality but not ultimate freedom from evolution.

Virtue

Pure Art.

Vice

Fear, belief, faith, control, science, and the like.

Self-Love

A mental state, mood or condition caused by the emotion of laughter becoming the principle that allows the Ego appreciation or universal association in permitting inclusion before conception

Exhaustion

That state of vacuity brought by exhausting a desire by some means of dissipation when the mood corresponds to the nature of the desire, i.e. when the mind is worried because of the non-fulfillment of such desire and seeks relief. By seizing this mood and living, the resultant vacuity is sensitive to the subtle suggestion of the sigil.

It is interesting to see that Spare in 1913 was already dismissing science along with religion. In this he was ahead of his time. Crowley, for example, emphasises the positive virtue of science, that it had finally freed us from the tyranny of religion; whereas Spare saw that science too could in turn prove to be a limitation.

The page is decorated with some symbols, including the hieroglyphic symbol for the Kai, or 'ego' in Egyptian psychology. There does not seem to be any connection between this and Kia – I have yet to find the origin of that term, or of the name 'Zos' that Spare uses for himself. In the latter case I only note how often the Z sound occurs in inspirational writing: Zarathustra (Nietzsche's hero), Znuz is Znees (the title of C.F. Russell's autobiography), Jeezus, Zunnus (the last anagram word in the Septem Sermones ad Mortuos) and the mass of Zeds in the gnostic words of power.

Both A.E. (in *The Candle of Vision*) and Rudolf Steiner independently associate the 'S' and 'Z' sounds with snakes and procreation. In *Earth Inferno*, Spare's first book, the term *Zod-Kia* occurs without explanation.

(iii)

The first chapter is entitled 'Different Religions and Doctrines as Means to Pleasure, Freedom and Power'.

He starts by asking "What is there to believe, but in Self?" and then goes on to attack various alternative beliefs, showing how they all flounder because of the basic duality at the root of all consciousness. Instead the wise pleasure-seeker is urged to become a Kiaist and Riding the Shark of his desire he crosses the ocean of the dual principle and engages himself in self-love.

For example: Some praise the idea of Faith. They believe that they are gods (or anything else) would make them such – proving by all they do to be full of its non-belief. Indeed, putting one's trust in faith is a little like trying to overcome a weak head for heights by forcing yourself not to look down: it only works if you repress your imagination. Spare concludes Then, this ambition of faith, is it so very desirable? Myself, I have not yet seen a man who is not God already.

He goes on to criticise prayer – except as a means of producing exhaustion. He criticises those who endeavour to prove the unity of religion; those who elevate 'truth'; those who claim that everything is 'symbolic' (and yet reject modern symbolism) those who say that only knowledge is eternal; and he criticises the ceremonial magicians. In

this last example he wins our hearts by saying : They have no magic to intensify the normal, the joy of a child or a healthy person...

The second chapter is entitled 'The consumer of Religion' and describes "Kia, in its transcendental and Conceivable Manifestation". He starts by saying: Of name it has no need, to designate, I call it Kia – I dare not claim it as myself. The Kia which can be expressed by conceivable ideas, is not the eternal Kia, which burns up all belief – but is the archetype of 'self' the slavery of mortality.

The beginning of that last sentence recalls, not inappropriately, the first line of the Tao They Chug which has been translated, in the Penguin Edition of D.C. Lane:

"The way that can be told
Is not the Constant way"

"The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;
The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.
Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets :
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations."

Which is again appropriate, except that the advice of the last line is more suggestive of the advice which will be quoted later from the Septem Sermones. Spare goes on to say : The Kia which can be vaguely expressed in words is the "Neither Neither." This Neither-Neither is explained in a later chapter. It is a thought process by which Spare endeavours to break through the limitations of dualistic thought in four steps. We start by considering any quality, for example 'light'. Duality immediately links that to the opposing quality 'dark'. The next step is to consider the combination of these two qualities – as in 'dusk' – and then we attempt to make the next step and meditate upon the absence of those two qualities – the 'Neither-Neither' as opposed to the 'Both-And.'

As a meditation this is reminiscent of the Zen Buddhists' koan by which practitioners attempt to confound reason and thus break through it. One example of this is the well-known koan "What is the sound of one hand clapping"? A very appropriate example especially as Spare later suggests that we try to see light by its own quality, and not in its contrast with darkness.

Spare's own description of the Kia is somewhat confusing. This is perhaps inevitable on account of the very nature of his subject and yet I cannot help comparing it with the, to me, very clear first sermon of the Septem Sermones Ad Mortuos by C. G. Jung, where Basilides describes the Pleroma – a possible equivalent to Kia.

This should be read in conjunction with Spare. I will attempt a summary, but it should be borne in mind that this is a poor substitute and that it necessarily omits to answer a lot of objections which are in fact dealt with in the full text of the Septem Sermones.

Basilides starts by saying that he begins with nothingness – which is the same as

fullness. Nothingness is both empty and full – you might as well call it black, white or whatever you like, for having all qualities is the same as having no qualities. This nothingness is called the Pleroma and in it both thinking and being cease – it is quite fruitless to think about it for it would mean self-dissolution.

Creatura is not in the Pleroma, but in itself. True the Pleroma everywhere pervades Creatura but it is in no way coloured by it or shared with it, just as light cannot be said to colour a completely transparent body. Yet figuratively speaking this makes us parts of the Pleroma and, also figuratively, we are the whole Pleroma. So why does he bother to speak of the Pleroma if it is all or nothing? Answer: he's got to start somewhere! And he starts there to free you from the delusion that there is somewhere some fixed and unchangeable principle. The only thing you can be sure of is 'Change'; but Creatura is what is changeable, and so the only fixed and certain thing.

How did Creatura originate? Answer: it did not. Created beings come to pass, not Creatura. Created being, just as much as non-creation was inherent in the Pleroma and so came to pass. Distinctiveness is a quality of Creatura, whereas the Pleroma has all: distinctiveness and indistinctiveness.

Why go on about 'qualities' of the Pleroma after what has been said? Answer: man, being of Creatura, has distinctiveness as an essence. It is his nature to distinguish things. When we talk about qualities of the Pleroma we learn nothing of the Pleroma, we are really revealing our own nature, or way of thought. We must be true to our nature and go on distinguishing.

Why must we distinguish things? Answer: if we cease to distinguish we fall into the Pleroma and cease to be creatures. "This is the death of the creature. Therefore we die in such measure as we do not distinguish". This is why non-distinction is a great danger for the creature.

At this point it seems that Basilides is recommending that we do NOT strive after Kia, he is telling us of its dangers. One could say that the danger is only to the CREATURE and if we wish to transcend that state then that danger does not concern us. However there are passages where Spare himself refers to the dangers of the freedom of Kia: "Total vacuity is difficult and unsafe for those governed by morality, complexes...."

It must be remembered that the duality is the BASIS of consciousness and manifestation; so that only a TOTAL dissolution can be rid of it. In practice the law of duality will ensure that any attainable ecstasy will tend to alternate with agony. Like a pendulum we swing between states.

What then can the Kiaist gain? To indicate an answer I continue to paraphrase Sermon I.

As was said we need to go through the play of distinguishing qualities of the qualitiless Pleroma in order to foster our own distinctiveness. These qualities came in pairs: the

Effective and the Ineffective, Fullness and Emptiness, Living and Dead, Light and Dark, Good and Evil and so on.

In the Pleroma they are not – being balanced and so void. But as we are the Pleroma itself (see earlier) we have these qualities. But we are of Creatura, and so we do not have these qualities in a balanced and void state; as distinctiveness is of our essence we have them in a distinct form i.e. instead of balanced they are EFFECTIVE. “The Pleroma is rent in us”.

We are now at an important point: we are moving from a philosophy of perfection – so far the ‘Kia’ idea could be said to amount to the perfectly true statement ‘if you want to obtain desires then you must give up having desires’ – to a liveable philosophy, or system of magic. So I will quote the next paragraph of Sermon I in full:

When we strive after the good or the beautiful we thereby forget our own nature, which is distinctiveness, and we are delivered over to the qualities of the Pleroma, which are pairs of opposites. We labour to attain to the good and the beautiful, yet at the same time we also lay hold of the evil and the ugly, since in the Pleroma they are one with the good and the beautiful. When, however, we remain true to our nature, which is distinctiveness, we distinguish ourselves from the good and the beautiful, and therefore, at the same time, from the evil and the ugly. And THUS we fall not into the Pleroma, namely, into nothingness and dissolution.”

With the possible exception of that last sentence this paragraph is absolutely in keeping with Spare’s first chapter and his criticism of those who flounder after desire and so also gain their opposites.

As an example of the practical application of this idea consider Sermon V where Basilides, talking of ‘spirituality’ and ‘sexuality’, reminds us that we must not forget to distinguish ourselves from them. They are not OUR qualities, in the sense that we possess and contain them; rather are they of a nature above and beyond us.

So, of course, this way of thinking is out of keeping with our 20th century education (although utterly in keeping with much ‘primitive’ thought) and therefore it cannot be considered as an instant cure to anyone’s troubles. However I would like you to IMAGINE the very great change which does in fact develop in the lives of those who encourage this idea to grow in their lives at the expense of the ‘rationalist’ hypothesis. Their sexuality for example, is no longer their ‘possession’; instead it is something ‘without’ which visits one. In practice this means that sexuality is no longer a possession which one feels obliged to compare in power with one’s own rivals, and there is no more fear of possessing too little or too much of it. Nor is there fear that it is a finite quantity that is in danger of being used up, or atrophying with disuse nor is it something that one can sell to another. Instead it is something which visits one. Therefore one must become the seducer in order to be seduced ♦to encourage sexuality one must make oneself attractive to it; to banish it one has at one’s disposal the entire tradition of banishment of spirits. In fact this is an idea to be lived, not discussed.

This first sermon ends with the answer to the paradox: if it is so bad to strive for a quality of the Pleroma, then should we really strive after distinctiveness? We are reminded that in fact the Pleroma has no qualities – we create them through thinking. It is not our thinking but our BEING which is distinctiveness. Therefore must we in fact not strive after 'difference' as such but rather OUR OWN BEING. By striving after our own being we attain our goal; but, alas, thought estranges us from being. So the purpose of all the knowledge given in the Sermon was in fact that it should serve as a leash to constrain thought.

I think that Thelemites would therefore stand and applaud at the end of this sermon!

This second chapter of The Book of Pleasure contains a sentence that demands some apology as it stands. Spare writes "As unity conceived duality, it begot trinity, begot tetragrammaton" In view of the usual nihilistic occult view of creation this is highly eccentric. As we have seen it is the Pleroma which necessarily begets duality ($0=2$ in Crowley's formula) because everything which emerges from it comes with its opposite. (So only even numbers, that is to say the 'feminine' principles, arrive out of nothing) And in no way can the Pleroma be described as 'One thing'. But whereas it is absurd to talk of a man giving birth to a woman (unity begot duality) it is quite in order for a man to be born from a woman (a unity being found within a duality). Once we have the duality we have the foundation of consciousness, and it is consciousness which looks back at the original duality and perceives that it contains two units. Thus consciousness can extrapolate behind that duality and postulate a superior unity, calling it 'the action of extracting a duality from the Pleroma'.

This is of course a construct of consciousness' own workings and so ultimately trash. However it creates new complications because to talk about 'one act of creation' is to postulate a moment of time – to name a 'before' and an 'after'. As Spare says in his next sentence "Duality, being unity, is Time..." Thus we find Saturn or 'Time'; represented in the first three sephiroth of the Tree of Life even though they do not yet contain sufficient material for three dimensional creation.

Spare closes the chapter with his observation on the inevitable ups and downs of existence. Ecstasy for any length of time is difficult to obtain, and laboured heavily for. With what does he balance his ecstasy? Measure for Measure by intense pain, sorrow and miseries. Various degrees of misery alternating with gusts of pleasure and emotions less anxious, would seem the condition of consciousness and existence. Duality is the law.

At this point the casual reader (I'd be less surprised to find a London taxicab at the South Pole than to find a casual reader still with us) is inclined to drop the book in disappointment. Duality is the law – so Spare has offered us no hope of relief.

However there is a big difference. We may not be liberated from failure and misery, but we may be in a position to use it. Knowing the law of duality brings the possibility of

distinguishing ourselves from its working. No more the blind slide into despair but rather the studied descent, and the plan to use that unavoidable despair in order to plan the next high point. This is the key to Spare's practical work, or living magic. I can only say that it does with practice and understanding indeed help to create the possibility of exultation in despair. I end with his nice symbol for creation:

"One form made of two, that is three-fold and having four directions."

(iv)

'Soliloquy on God-Head' is the next chapter: it criticises some modern beliefs.

You disbelieve in Ghosts and God – because you have not seen them? What! You have never seen the mocking ghosts of your beliefs? Yea your very faculties and most courageous Lies are Gods ! Who is the slayer of your Gods – but a God!

The writings of Nietzsche are worth reading in conjunction with Spare, (many passages in, for example, the Dawn of Day have been already marked with this chapter in mind but I hope to restrain myself from quoting). In particular the style and feel of Thus Spake Zarathustra is reflected in Spare's Anathema of Zos (an automatic writing) in such phrases as: Let your pleasures be as sunsets, HONEST... BLOODY... GROTESQUE; together with Zos's references to the need for clean air and solitude.

However Nietzsche had much greater respect for science than had Spare; as was said before, in Nietzsche's time, science seemed to be the liberator rather than the tyrant. Spare asks us to be more critical of what science has given us. In Thundersqueak for example it is explained how every triumph of experimenting amateur technologists is later annexed as a 'Triumph of Modern Science', whereas in fact the only effect that can be INDISPUTABLY ascribed to science is its ability to STOP certain things from happening – e.g. religion or magic.

Spare describes how science has 'discovered' new diseases, thus creating then in our beliefs so that we suffer them and need to call again on science for their cure. He describes, how 'facts' are produced in opposing pairs: for example the discovery that the sun was millions of miles away rather than a few miles away meant that we had also to believe that it was much more powerful than we before believed – in order to justify the amount of heat we receive from it.

Spare illustrates how you are 'one' with a butterfly in an interesting passage. He adds: So if you hurt the Butterfly you hurt yourself. But your belief that you don't hurt yourself protects you from hurt – for a time ! Belief gets tired and you are miserably hurt!

You are fearsome of entering a den of tigers?.. Yet daily you fearlessly enter dens inhabited by more terrible creatures than Tigers [men that is], and you come out unharmed – why?

Science is the accursed doubt of the possible, yea, of what does exist! You cannot

conceive an impossibility, nothing is impossible, you are the impossible! Doubt is delay – time – but how it punishes! Nothing is more true than anything else! What are you NOT – you ever answered, Truthfully?

(v)

The next chapter is called 'The Death Posture.' A name which recalls Basilides's remark that the creature dies in so far as he does not make distinction.

Spare starts by warning that ideas of self in conflict cannot be slain, for it is your resistance that gives them their reality. He advocates a formula of non-resistance: Does not matter – please yourself.

Here he describes the Neither-Neither rule and tells us to remember to laugh at all times, to recognise all things and to resist nothing: then there is no conflict, incompatibility or compulsion as such....'Please yourself' is its creed. That last quote suggests to me that here in 1913 Spare was the mouthpiece for the negative or 'feminine' counterpart of Crowley's very positive "Do what thou wilt". Two poles of the same 93 current as it were.

In support of these passages I could quote the whole of Taoist literature known to me. In the second chapter of the Tao Te Ching is : "Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words".

I will not quote at length the description of the Death Posture and the kindred practices. There are many preliminary practices as innumerable as sins, futile of themselves but designative of the ultimate means.

You strain to your full height, standing on tiptoe with neck stretched, hands clasped behind your back and arms rigid: breathe deeply and quickly until you feel giddy and exhausted. This prepares you for the Death Posture; you lie lazily on your back as in a yawn, sigh and smile. Forget time and the world.

Or else stare hard at yourself in a mirror until the vision crumbles, the effort is forgotten and you have a feeling of unreachable immensity. This should be practiced before the actual Death Posture in order to give some idea of the mental state.

Let him practice it daily, accordingly till he arrives at the centre of desire. Thus by hindering belief and semen from conception they become simple and cosmic. (The latter being a reference to the alchemical transmutation of sexual energy).

I like this sentence: The primordial vacuity (or belief) is not by the exercise of focussing the mind on a negation of all conceivable things but by doing it now, not eventually. It suggests a quasi-Zen story which might describe a pupil who asks Spare how to achieve liberation and receives the answer "There ! you've missed it". In other words: at any instant liberation is so close that the very act of asking the question was to miss by delay an opportunity to jump out of time and grab it.

It was not at all clear to me what the connection could be between Spare's magic system and the Egyptian system with its richness of Gods until I recalled the remarkable 19th and 20th verses of the eleventh chapter of the Divine Pymander of Hermes as given in G.R.S. Mead's Thrice Greatest Hermes as 'Mind unto Hermes'. I quote part of the 20th verse which bridges this gap quite comfortably, being highly appropriate to Spare's work, yet surely of Egyptian inspiration:

"Then in this way know God; as having all things in Himself as thoughts, the whole Cosmos itself.

If, then, thou does not make thyself like unto God thou canst not know him. For like is knowable to like alone.

Make then thyself to grow to the same stature as the Greatness which transcends all measure: leap forth from every body; transcend all time; become Eternity; and thus shalt thou know God.

Conceiving nothing as impossible unto thyself, think thyself deathless and able to know all – all arts, all sciences, the way of every life.

Become more lofty than all height, and lower than all depth. Collect into thyself all sense of all creatures – of fire, and water, dry and moist. Think that thou art at the same time in every place – in earth, in sea, in sky, not yet begotten, in the womb, young, old and dead, in after-death conditions.

And if thou knowest all these things at once – times, places, doings, qualities and quantities; thou canst know God"

(vi)

In his next chapter 'The Cloudy Enemies Born of Stagnant Self-Hypnotism', Spare endeavours to clarify for us his use of the word 'Belief', natural belief rather than the conscious 'faith' that he dismisses in his first chapter. He says:

"The Nature of belief equals all possibilities ultimately true by identification through culture to an idea of time, so what is not timely is not true, and what is not true, prognostication. Thought of one thing implies the possibility of another idea as contradicting but not dissociated, belief is to make "one" more convincing.

The Centre of belief is love for one's self, projecting environment for fulfillment but allowing its distortion to simulate denial, an ambition to become ulterior to self-desire, but you cannot get further than the centre, so one multiplies (believes) in order to be more unaware of the fundamental."

Here Spare is obviously talking of different levels of belief, indeed he refers to those in desire as refusing to believe what they believe. It is the most deeply unconscious belief that projects the basic matter of the environment, the lesser and more conscious beliefs merely add fleeting impressions or distortions until we come to complete consciousness which is baffled by this environment and struggles to master it. Thus the very conscious desire for, say, riches is going to evoke opposition from the environment, as it is inevitable that at some level there must be a belief which places a limit on one's potential wealth. This schism, or blindness, is necessary for we are escapists. If nature

did not pretend to surprise us we would fall back into self.

The basic belief of science (and so of a fairly important part of any scientist's mind) is that the universe is ultimately dead and boring. The advance of science slowly kills the universe but there are little bursts of surprise on the wavefront. Television regularly announces amazing new discoveries or theories which threaten to overturn scientific thought – but we hear no more of them. Either they too prove boring or else they are clobbered to death in turn.

So we see that nature is in fact playing with science, throwing her scraps like feeding a caged monkey with nuts. Thus she is ever saving science from falling into the horror of ultimate success. The burning ecstasies of hopeless love illustrate how greater denial brings greater desire and less danger of reality.

So effective magic requires that we get our desire away from the Great Abortionist and down into the unconscious. The sigil system of Spare's is designed with this purpose in mind.

At last this chapter provides the cynic with the disappointment he invites. Spare does not overlook his philosophy's own limitations. We must use the Neither-Neither everywhere, we must disperse all belief in Spare's own writing by the Neither-Neither. Indeed we must dispel the conception of The Neither-Neither by the Neither-Neither and believe it is 'not necessary. Some of us will find that rather easy!

For another account of the transcending of dualities by their annihilation see the remarks on the Mystical Marriage in Aleister Crowley's Liber Aleph – chapters 20-25 in particular.

(vii)

In 'Self Love as a Moral Doctrine and Virtue' we have a chapter which could almost have been assembled from quotes from Nietzsche and the Tao Te Ching. Consider the opening sentences. "The criterion for action, is freedom of movement, timeliness of expression, pleasuring. The value of moral doctrine is in its freedom for transgression. Simplicity I hold most precious." Nietzsche would also have been happy to read:

"The True teacher implants no knowledge, but shows him his own superabundance Which is nearer you, self-love and its immorality, or love and morals? Perfect charity acquires, hence it benefits all things by not giving. Knowledge is but the excrement of experience."

In the comparison with the Taoist doctrine I will present Spare's quotes from this chapter in alternation with Tao Te King quotes, labelling them S and T accordingly.

S: Are not the most simple things in the world the most perfect, pure, innocent, and their properties the most wonderful?

T: The Uncarved Block though seemingly of small account is greater than anything that

is under heaven.

S: When faith perishes then duty to moral doctrines perishes, we are without sin and endure for ever in all-devouring love.

T: Banish human kindness, discard morality, And the people will be dutiful and compassionate.

S: It is because I know without learning...

T : Therefore the sage... learns to be without learning.

S: Control is by leaving things to work out their own salvation...

T: Governing a large state is like boiling small fish [i.e. they must not be over-handled].

S: He is akin to the great purpose. His actions explained for him, good seen of his evil, without knowing, everyone satisfied with his will".

T: Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden: takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction. That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.

In illustrating these parallel quotes are we trying to prove that Spare has cribbed from earlier sources? No. Instead we are trying to get over the difficulty that Spare's term 'Self-Love' will be repulsive to many of us because it suggests something that we think we know about, and despise. But I ask you, is your idea of selfishness really deserving of the word 'Love' in 'Self-Love'?

By taking two, at first sight very different, texts and finding in them some similarity in their liberating ideas we hope to have illustrated alternative routes to Spare's theory which will help to dilute initial misunderstanding. On the other hand we've also made it possible to treble the misunderstanding!

A final cheek-moistening quote from Spare: May the idea of God perish and with it women; have they not both made me appear clownish?

(viii)

In the 'Doctrine of Eternal Self-Love' earlier passages are summarised and further illustration of the qualities and merits of Self Love given.

If this book had a contents list, the title of the next chapter would draw our attention straight away; it is 'The Complete Ritual and Doctrine of Magic.' Firstly he mentions secrecy, then he gives a definition of magic that would please an alchemist: Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times.

Spare then reminds us that we must avoid "Deliberation, over-consciousness and concentration". This is the most tricky part, the 'letting go' of the desire so that it can speed to the attainment of its goal; for conscious desire does not work. Nor will we need to hallucinate.

The process he describes is for those who have not transcended the law of duality (what a relief!) and so it needs to work within that law. Therefore the magician must wait

until he has another desire that is of similar intensity to the one he wishes to achieve. This desire will then be sacrificed in order that the first should be attained. An example would be for the magician to choose a time when a friend has finally let him down, his belief in his friend has then collapsed and the sacrifice of this friendship will answer the purpose: This free entity of belief and his desire are united to his purpose by the use of sigils or sacred letters.

So the practitioner is in a state of despair, he constructs a sigil to formalise his wish and he seats himself in meditation. He calms his mind of all thought except of that one visualised sigil. (It is no longer a 'wish' that is in his mind, but rather a simple geometric shape). In meditation he draws his consciousness slowly into one part, so that no outside impressions disturb.

This produces a feeling of detached calm, of balance which recalls the passage in Crowley's Book of Lies: "The Universe is in equilibrium; therefore he that is without it, though his force be but a feather, can overturn the Universe".

Only the sigil is retained in thought, it is to be used as the 'chalice'. Withdrawing his consciousness to a point gives a feeling of surrounding immensity. he is the point, around him is infinity – Crowley would describe this as Hadit and Nuit and indeed the ultimate marriage to which he refers is here reflected. For Spare says he must now imagine a union taking place between himself (The mystic union of the Ego and the Absolute). This should produce a sexual ecstasy, but it is not desired that it should become physical in manifestation. The nectar of this ecstasy – The syllabub of Sun and Moon – should be slowly sipped from the chalice.

The correct mental state should be one where he is beyond all desire, the original object of the operation is forgotten and no longer of interest, except that he is still holding this apparently meaningless sigil in mind.

But should he fail, and still be yearning for this desire, then he is in danger of being obsessed by it. Instead of being tidily packaged and dropped deep into the unconscious the desire is free to take over his mind at this moment of extreme vulnerability. All the free energy of his original disappointment is at its disposal.

(ix)

So the next chapter is a 'Note on the Difference of Magical Obsession (Genius) and Insanity'.

He criticises spiritualism in a way that is customary amongst magicians. Whereas the magician consciously chooses an obsession, and therefore has ultimate power over it through knowledge of how to bind it, the passive medium lays himself open to unknown obsessions. Should the uninvited obsession in his mind become as strong as his own Ego then there is a split in personality, a loss of control.

Spare concludes that Disease and Insanity arise when there is a free energy within,

which has no role to play in the vital economy. This free energy, which should have been used to vitalise a sigil, is like an unemployed work force which, having no part in the vital economy, will seek expression through resistance. (This suggests an analogy with some theories about cancer cells).

(x)

The next chapter called 'Sigils' (subtitled 'The Psychology of Believing') tells us very little about sigils, except that it reminds us at the end that the magical sigil should not be allowed to return to consciousness and known, but must be repressed and forgotten.

Spare suggests that the state of mind most productive of genius is one which is open to all perceptions and is immoral in that it allows free association of ideas without the strict rules of past belief or knowledge.

He asks what has happened to our childish wonder when we used to see things for the first time and marvel at them, asking 'childish' (i.e. philosophical) questions. Is it not that the world is now sterilised by our patterns of 'knowledge' (i.e. beliefs), which are like a curtain between us and surprise?

The difference between this receptivity and the scorned receptivity of the spiritualist in the last chapter is clearly one which calls for care – or at least 'innocence'!

(xi)

Here follows a nice chapter called 'The Sub-Consciousness'.

He begins by announcing that all geniuses have active sub-consciousnesses, and they also have some, not relevant, powerful interest or hobby which serves to distract consciousness from their aim from time to time, with the result that the subconscious can work on it. Thus it is that inspiration comes at odd moments. It DOES demand a previous exhaustion of concentration but it is unlikely to arise at that time, but rather when the consciousness has wearily looked away, or we have 'slept on it'. (A booklet by W.H. Easton called Creative thinking and How to Develop it reprinted from the August 1946 edition of Mechanical Engineering' supports this observation).

Thus it is that we must forget our wish once it is sigillised. An important note is that it is no good to wish the opposite as such, because that is too reminiscent of the original wish; instead we must consider irrelevant topics.

Spare's idea of the sub-consciousness is more akin to Jung's Collective Unconscious than any lesser function. Assuming an evolutionary history, he points out that just as our evolutionary history is illustrated in the development of the foetus, so also is it registered in our whole being. If the human brain has developed from the basic mammalian brain – rather than having been miraculously and independently created – then its deeper ('deeper' for the evolutionary growth is apparently outward) structure must be common to all mammals including man. Progressing backward, the different branches of evolution converge and we find that we contain the blueprints for all creation right back

to our cell structure which reflects the earliest forms of life.

So, by regressing into this 'Storehouse of Memories' we can contact all the strata of previous life forms. But evolution is largely a process of increasing complexity – resulting in decreasing competence and ability. By the slow processes of conscious thought Man has to struggle to overcome his obvious limitations. His technology has provided him with the swiftness of the leopard, the ability to fly, and resistance to the seasons; yet he is still not as mighty as the microbe! However we can contact these deep layers by the use of Spare's sigils and can thus tap their powers directly.

The only reason why our customary methods of learning and study ever produce results is that they can produce this exhaustion which diverts the concentration.

All ritual and ceremony is worthless – originally devised to amuse and later to deceive. But, as is customary, the deceivers end up by deceiving themselves more than their victims.

(xii)

In 'Sigils. Belief With Protection' he describes his system of sigils. The exact process is not really important.

Throughout the book his illustrations are decorated with beautiful sigils of different styles. He has his own magical alphabets – he uses six different alphabets in this book and does not explain any of them, because a magical alphabet is a set of symbols you devise to communicate with your subconscious and so should be of your own private design (like the perfect 'personal' tarot pack). "Sigils are monograms of thought".

He suggests that we write in block capitals and superimpose the letters into a monogram. So 'WOMAN' could become for example :

In this way then he shows how the desire 'This is my wish to obtain the strength of a tiger' can reduce to a single monogram.

He goes on to describe methods of use in a passage which makes one wonder whether he is amplifying the instructions of his 'Complete Ritual' or whether he is giving an alternative approach. He talks of obtaining vacuity by some means, quoting as good examples: mantras and asana, women and wine, tennis and patience, or walking in concentration. He adds that none of these are necessary to someone who has for a moment attained the state of beyond-duality, as by the Neither-Neither; so perhaps this is a 'lesser' magic for those who have not mastered the Complete Ritual earlier discussed?

Indeed it appears that Spare has followed the best scheme for a book on practical magic: he has started with the theory of perfection – and thus repelled the merely curious – has proceeded to describe his 'High Magic' and thus repelled dabblers – and only now is he telling us 'how to do spells'.

When one is exhausted the sigil form is held in mind until it grows vague and vanishes – taking with it the desire.

(xiii)

The next chapter on 'Symbolism' extends the theory to symbols in general. He describes how an artist can know a truth in symbol form long before the scientist uncovers it. The Egyptians in this way understood the theory of evolution – as reflected in images of their gods – but they only understood it as far as was useful in their lives; they did not pursue this knowledge as we have done.

(xiv)

His views on art are enlarged in 'Automatic Drawing as a Means to Art'. He provides a parallel with his law of self-love which had been praised as a law which permitted its own transgression; for the laws of art exist and yet they need not tyrannise. As soon as one law begins to dominate we are free to create a whole new art form by breaking that very law.

He describes how to use a sigil as a basis for an automatic drawing. First you train the hand to be free of inhibition, to wander freely in easy loops and curls (as distinct from the manic scribble of frustration). Then a sigil is used to tap the subconscious level corresponding to the desired picture (he illustrates a drawing based on a bird karma) whilst the consciousness is constrained elsewhere – for example by staring at your thumb in a moonbeam's light until "it is opalescent and suggests a fantastic reflection of yourself..."

(xv)

He finishes with the chapter 'On Myself', in which he questions all he has done, and his worth or 'right' to do it. So cautious is he that he does not even dare to fully believe his own ideas and yet: "Poor though I be my contentment is beyond your understanding."

It is difficult to restrain oneself from asking a question about Spare which is only a slightly less subtle form of the old wisecrack: "If you're so clever why aren't you rich?". After all if it was really Einstein's genius which has lead to the discovery of the atomic power which now holds the world in balance, why did he fail to become a world dictator? Can you really believe that he did not try?

The Tao Te Ching says:

I alone am inactive and reveal no signs,
Like a baby that has not yet learned to smile,
Listless as though with no home to go back to.
The multitude all have more than enough.
I alone seem to be in want.
My mind is that of a fool – how blank !
Vulgar people are clear.

I alone am drowsy
Vulgar people are alert.
I alone am muddled.
Calm like the sea;
Like a high wind that never ceases.
The multitude all have purpose.
I alone am foolish and uncouth.
I alone am different from others
And value being fed by the Mother.

Austin Spare ends with the sentence:

Alas the futility of the idea of God has not yet reached its limit, all men are liars, appear striving for insanity its climax: while I alone as one prematurely aged, reason tottering on its throne, remain sane, in positive chastity, confessing no conscience, no morals – a virgin in singleness of purpose.

(xvi)

In this essay I have not mentioned his illustrations e.g. 'The Death Posture : Preliminary Sensation Symbolised' where the figure has no head and thus recalls the 'on not having a head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare' s life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure's'head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare' s life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure.

For the nature of Spare' s writing is such that it is possible to read the whole book for the first time and gain absolutely nothing from it. However do not be discouraged, repeated reading is satisfying. At least Spare has the decency to make his books SHORT.

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Introduction to The Book of Pleasure

by Kenneth Grant

First published in The Book of Pleasure, 93 Publishing, 1975

Austin Osman Spare was born at Snowhill, London, in 1886. Apart from William Blake, John Martin, Aubrey Beardsley, Sidney Sime, and a mere handful of others, England

has produced no artist to equal Spare for sheer ability and imaginative fecundity.

Spare was not only a graphic artist; he wrote four books on what he described as symbolic sorcery *The Book of Pleasure* (1909-1913), *The Focus of Life* (1918-1921), *Anathema of Zos* (1924) and *The Book of the Living Word of Zos* (1951-1956), a collection of aphorisms and magical formulae which remains unpublished to this day.¹

Spare published some of his drawings in books such as *Earth Inferno* (1905), *A Book of Satyrs* (1907), and in periodicals; he also illustrated a few books by other writers, but the four works mentioned above are all that survives of his extensive occult researches. They trace the evolution and development of the curious system of sorcery with which he was preoccupied until his death in 1956. They were, however, mere punctuation marks, pauses, between the steady outflow of graphic work which he produced almost continuously during an obscure, outwardly uneventful and impoverished existence.

Although Spare had no specific teacher where his art was concerned,² he did have a teacher – or perhaps guru would be a more appropriate term – in a “magical” sense. During his most impressionable years circumstances led him into the company of a self-confessed witch, a mysterious Mrs. Paterson who befriended him and initiated him into the mysteries of her craft. He was extremely reticent about Mrs Paterson. All that I was able to elicit from him during the eight years of friendship was that she was very old when he met her and that she claimed descent from a line of Salem (New England) witches that Cotton Mather had failed to eradicate.

Spare did not get on with his mother and he looked upon Mrs Paterson as a “second mother”. What little he said about her explains much of his work and his life-long devotion to the occult. She was able to transform herself on certain occasions into a woman of alluring loveliness: this she had done in his presence as a proof of her magical powers.³ Furthermore, she gave him the keys whereby he gained access to the “Witches” Sabbath, the genuine extra-terrestrial event of which the popular version is but a debased and grotesque parody. It was during his exultation to the dimension where this event occurs that he was taught how to explore the subconscious with the use of sentient symbols and the alphabet of desire described in [*The Book of Pleasure*]. These methods, once demonstrated, had to be brought down and “earthed”, and it took several years for Spare to integrate them with his own creative techniques.

The Book of Pleasure embodies the first vague searchings into the subconscious regions that he was to explore more fully in later books, for it should be understood that there was no creed of the Zos and the Kia – the Imagination and the Will – in the teachings he received at the Sabbath; they were of a purely practical and magical nature. It was Spare who wedded the practices of witchcraft to the doctrines of the Neither-Neither and the Atmospheric “I”, which he interpreted with fantastic manual dexterity. These doctrines were inspired by his early studies, for Spare was an omnivorous reader, and some of his more obvious influences – from Laotze to Aleister Crowley – are readily apparent.

Spare was drawn to Crowley in 1910 when he became a member of the *Argentum Astrum*,⁴ shortly after contributing some of his drawings to Crowley's periodical, *The Equinox*.⁵

Spare claimed to be one of the first surrealists. He had visualized the irrational and transcribed his vision directly from subconscious strata of the psyche; he was also able to galvanise primal centres of awareness by a formula of atavistic resurgence that few artists – and fewer occultists – have succeeded in re-activating with impunity to their work or to themselves.

The *Book of Pleasure* contains a unique method of obtaining control of the subconscious energies latent in the human mind in the form of primal atavisms. It is evident that if such energy can be tapped and channelled, it can be directed to creative or destructive ends on a scale infinitely beyond anything achievable by the mind in the more limited state that characterizes “waking” consciousness. But the subconscious does not yield to conscious suggestion for it is founded on sensation, not upon thought, hence a tactual and visual means must be employed if it is to be penetrated and permeated with the vitalizing current of will or desire. The process must be symbolically enacted, and its intent not consciously formulated, for “unless desire is subconscious, it is not fulfilled”. A method had to be found of by-passing the conscious mind and planting the desire directly in the soil of the subconsciousness. To this end Spare evolved his own system of sentient symbols which took on a secret meaning and which constituted a “sacred” alphabet of desire of which “each letter in its pictorial aspect relates to a Sex principle”. From this alphabet it is possible to construct the words of a mysterious language of sensation that reifies the imagery of appetite.

Spare believed that the hieroglyphics of ancient peoples such as the Egyptian and Amerindian are the remains of an occult language. That the Egyptians practised a form of sorcery involving a process similar to that of Spare's formula of atavistic resurgence is suggested by the fact that the hieroglyphics are usually in zoomorphic form.

It is known that the priests of antiquity assumed animal-headed masks when performing rituals designed to produce magical effects; also, that when dormant forces were awakened, the magician was shaken to the very depths of his being as he manifested the atavisms that his spells had invoked. The convulsions of Tibetan “oracles”; the strange phenomena of spirit possession common to most peoples of antiquity are proof of Spare's theory; proof also that some cosmic forces then possesses the human vehicle and enables the magician to perform superhuman feats.

The mainspring of the formula of atavistic resurgence is – as one might suppose – a form of sexual sorcery. The Adepts of old concealed the process from the eyes of the profane (i.e. those whose ineptitude would destroy them), for once these atavisms are unleashed, magical obsession occurs and there is no reversing the course of events any more than one can reverse the flow of semen on the point of its leaping forth. If the magician is unable to control the power he has invoked, or if he is unable to permit its unhindered movement as it wells into consciousness, then he is literally blasted into

death or insanity.

The secret of this sorcery is analogous to that taught by Crowley in his Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) where it was – and still is – the fulcrum of magical power and the means of gaining access to trans-human dimensions and of communicating with the denizens of other worlds.

Black Eagle by Austin Spare, c.1936. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Spare maintained that he was in communication with extra-terrestrial Intelligences and conscious forces possessed of superhuman power and knowledge. He referred frequently to Black Eagle,⁶ who inspired many of his “magical” drawings. Black Eagle seems to have been a concentration of sinister trans-cosmic current which, according to H.P. Lovecraft,⁷ had been tapped in its primordial phase by the witch cults of New England. Perhaps Black Eagle was the alter ego of Mrs Paterson, for it was not long after her death that this current began to manifest in Spare’s work.

Whatever the identity of Spare’s genius – Mrs Paterson, Black Eagle, or one of the “host of familiars” by which he was habitually surrounded – the fact remains that Spare produced a large amount of work during abnormal states of consciousness or self-induced trance. He was not mediumistic in the usual sense of the term, nor did he produce automatic drawings in the way that spirit mediums produce automatic texts. Rather, Spare transmitted his work in much the same way that The Book of the Law and other magical writings were transmitted by Aleister Crowley,⁸ i.e. he entered consciously and magically into communication with superhuman Intelligences.

Towards the end of his life, when Spare lived more or less reclusively in a Dickensian South London slum, he was asked whether he regretted his lonely existence. “Lonely!” he exclaimed, and with a sweep of his arm he indicated the host of unseen elementals and familiar spirits that were his constant companions; he had but to turn his head to catch a fleeting glimpse of their subtle presences.

I have described some of Spare’s transactions with his “host of familiars” in *The Magical Revival*, but the reader of *The Book of Pleasure* will have little difficulty in imagining what these creatures were like. Imagination is the operative word, for Spare’s sorcery is a form of veritable imagination or image-making; of “dreaming true”. He exalted the imagination above every other faculty and claimed that “dreams shall flesh” if the requisite ability to reify them has been absolutely mastered. Herein lies the key to his sorcery; the ability to “visualise sensation” and to convey a world of imaginative reality to the observer.

Augustus John regarded Spare as one of the great graphic artists of his time, and many years earlier John Singer Sargent, G.F. Watts, George Bernard Shaw, and others praised him in similar terms. Spare sent a copy of *The Book of Pleasure* to Sigmund Freud who described it as one of the most significant revelations of subconscious mechanisms that had appeared in modern times.

Whatever the value of Spare's contribution to art and psychology, his contribution to experimental occultism is supreme, for he discovered a method of reifying the dream world under the controlling aegis of the fully conscious will.

KENNETH GRANT

Winter Solstice 1974 e.v.

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NOTES

Subtitled The Zoetic Grimoire of Zos. Zos was Spare's "magical" name. A selection of these aphorisms, together with an introduction to Spare and his work is to be published shortly by Frederick Muller Ltd., London, under the title Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, by Kenneth Grant. [Published in Zos Speaks!, Fulgur Limited, 1999]
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He was a student at the Royal College of Art in Kensington, London. [back to text](#)

A similar phenomenon occurred in the presence of Aleister Crowley when an ageing sorceress transformed herself into a "young woman of bewitching beauty", for purposes of vampirism. See The Confessions of Aleister Crowley (ed. Symonds and Grant), chapter 42, Jonathan Cape, London, 1969 [back to text](#)

The Order of the Silver Star. [back to text](#)

The Equinox, "The Encyclopaedia of Initiation", appeared in eleven numbers, ten of which were published between the years 1909 and 1913. Two only of Spare's drawings were reproduced. See The Equinox, vol. 1, number 2, pages 140 and 161. [back to text](#)

See The Magical Revival (Frederick Muller Ltd. 1972), plate facing page 149, for a reproduction of Spare's impression of Black Eagle, painted in 1946. [back to text](#)

Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). The New England writer whose tales of terror involve traffic with extra-terrestrial entities. [back to text](#)

See Crowley's Confessions. [back to text](#)

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Exploring Spare's Magic

by Lionel Snell

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of Pleasure describes Spare's magical system and its philosophical basis. In it he introduces an ultimate called "Kia" (analogous to the "Tao", the Cabalistic "Unmanifest", or Jung's "Pleroma") from which all manifestation stems via a process of refraction through the principle of duality: we perceive, for example, black and white

because they are manifest as a polarised pair, in the Kia they exist only in potential, being undistinguished and so unmanifest. It is clear from elsewhere in his writing that Spare was acquainted with Boehme's tract "On the Supersensual Life", where the disciple asks the master how he can come to know the supersensual life and is told "when thou canst throw thyself into THAT, where no creature dwelleth, though it be but for a moment..."

As humans we are caught up in dualities, divided against ourselves and ever seeking completion by living in desire, our universe being fragmented by our beliefs. Spare advocates a turning back to Kia and the end of all belief, denying all the dualities by his "neither neither": think of a manifestation, eg "white"; not white implies black; neither white nor black implies what? say grey; neither black, white nor grey implies what? ... and so on until our imagination is exhausted and consciousness teeters on the brink of the void – as in the Buddhist "not this, not that" meditation. Thus we get to know the Kia, and Freedom.

To practice Spare's magic one must disentangle a conscious desire from one's web of conscious and semi-conscious beliefs, distilling the essence of that desire into a simple sigil with no conscious associations, then carrying that sigil back into the Kia by exhausting oneself and collapsing into what he describes as "the death posture" – a total flop-out with no consciousness other than the awareness of the sigil, until that too fades. For greatest effect this should be done at a time of despair or disappointment, when some other desire has been thwarted and there is a pool of frustrated libido – "free belief" he calls it – to fuel the operation.

Such a bare description of his magic doesn't do it great justice. It is best to read his original works together with the commentaries listed at the end of this essay*. Rather than repeat existing material, this essay suggests some further ideas for research.

THE BIRTH OF AN AEON

In 1904 Austin Spare wrote – or rather "created" – his first book, which was published in 1905 as *Earth Inferno*: "created" because this book contains more images than words, and half the words in it are themselves quotation from other sources. The result is pretty incomprehensible – even with hindsight.

In the wake of the "fin de siècle" decadence, was this incomprehensibility just a deliberate attempt by a trendy young artist to create an aura of mystery and glamour? Reading *Earth Inferno* I have the impression of someone who has passed through despair to receive a glimpse of mystical truth, and who is now struggling to portray that realisation. It looks like a revelation which fails to communicate (to me) the essence of what the artist experienced. The fact that nine years later he is still earnestly trying to explain his discovery, and with slightly greater success, in his *Book of Pleasure* does confirm a genuine desire to teach rather than mystify.

In that case, what is Spare trying to communicate? Nothing less than an entire philosophy of life and magic; but one so simple yet so difficult to grasp that it is perhaps

best approached by comparison and contrast with other better known systems. I begin with some comparisons.

CROWLEY AND SPARE

The opening words of *Earth Inferno* are a picture caption (dated 1904), which ends with a prophecy: "Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit/And with it the resurrection of the Primitive Woman", so Spare is announcing some sort of turning point in history. In that same year Aleister Crowley received his *Book of the Law* which announced the birth of a new age. Interestingly one element of this revelation is a celebration of the "scarlet woman" – a female archetype unchained and reminiscent of Spare's "primitive woman". This element is even more clearly present in the work of Dion Fortune. In 1904 she too was writing her first book: as a young girl she was finding inspiration for her schoolgirl poetry on the coast near Weston Super Mare, an inspiration which later blossomed in the book *The Sea Priestess* set in that place and concerned with a magical operation to liberate society from the Victorian straight-jacket and announce a new female archetype – the priestly woman of power.

These coincidences suggest that Spare might have "tuned into" what one would call, depending on one's own beliefs, a ferment of ideas, a new current of thought, the spirit of the times, or the birth of a new aeon. There is other evidence of this surge of revolutionary thinking around 1904: this was the year when Jung became drawn to Freud and his concept of the "unconscious"; it was the year of another explorer of the unconscious – Salvador Dali; it was the time of Steiner's disenchantment with theosophy which led to the birth of "anthroposophy". Other works completed in 1904 to be published in 1905 include Einstein's special theory of relativity, and his paper on the photoelectric effect which won him the Nobel Prize in 1921 and which provided the first strong evidence to support the newly formulated quantum theory.

All in all 1904 was a most interesting year, and this was put most clearly by Crowley when he announced it as the year of the birth of a new aeon. So let us begin by comparing Spare's revelations with Crowley's.

Disappointingly there is no obvious comparison between Crowley's *Book of the Law* and Spare's *Earth Inferno* – one the work of a writer, the other the work of an artist. The nearest thing to "The Book of the Law" written by Spare is the first part of his later *Focus of Life*. It consists of three chapters of aphorisms dictated by three different beings – Kia, Zos and Ikkah – which first appear in *Earth Inferno*, and it therefore demands comparison with "The Book of the Law" which also consists of three chapters dictated by three beings. As the last words from Kia are "I – infinite space" it is immediate to identify Kia with Nuit and to try to see parallels in the two texts.

The only obvious parallels are in Spare's second chapter which contains some pretty Thelemic utterances, such as:

"The mighty are righteous for their morals are arbitrary";
"Judge without mercy, all this weakness is thy self abuse";

“There is only one sin – suffering”;
“... be surely what thou wilt” (an interesting comparison with “do what thou wilt”);
“Fear nothing – strike at the highest” ... and so on.

The Focus of Life was, however, written after Spare had been in contact with Crowley, so these similarities may well be due to Spare knowing The Book of the Law; but remember that he had rejected Crowley, so any influence would not be slavish imitation but rather ideas chosen because they were in accord with his own vision.

The conclusion I’m suggesting is that one way to view Spare’s magic is as his own interpretation of a new current which entered the group mind around 1904. He was seeing one facet of the whole; Crowley, Einstein, Jung, Fortune and probably many others were to pick up other facets of it. Each tried to explain what they saw: some like Crowley provided very full accounts, others like Einstein provided very detailed accounts of smaller parts of the whole. Spare was trying to give a full account, an entire philosophy of existence but did not communicate it very clearly. So we can understand his work better if we allow other people’s ideas to cast light on it.

The first difference between Crowley and Spare that strikes me is that Spare’s writing provides a simple, coherent theory where Crowley provides a detailed technology. It is possible to read Spare carefully and come up with the response “yes, but what are you supposed to DO?” – there is little practical instruction. Crowley, on the other hand, has provided an enormous corpus of ritual and other practices, more than any person could ever master in a lifetime, but there are times when one is hard to put to find one coherent theory behind all these practices – he went through his Golden Dawn phase, his Buddhist phase, his Thelemic phase and so on. By way of analogy you could compare Spare’s writing to Einstein’s – it may be hard to understand, but behind it lays a very simple model of reality. To obtain great energy, according to Einstein, it is only necessary to split the atom; to obtain a desire, says Spare, it is only necessary to remove it to the unconscious, organic level and consciously forget it. But in practice the simple splitting of an atom requires a vast investment in technology; similarly, most people cannot follow Spare’s simple instructions unless they have previously done a lot of self development along the lines of, say, Crowley’s magical technology (there may be some with innate magical sense, but most of us are still adrift on a sea of beliefs and desires). So one approach to Spare is to use his world-view to help clear one’s mind of a surfeit of gods, while actually practicing Thelemic techniques to strengthen one for Spare’s magical methods.

I like the contrast between Crowley’s “do what thou wilt” and Spare’s “be what thou wilt” because it illustrates my feelings that Crowley and Spare represent, as it were, the yang and yin of the new aeon. Though Crowley recognises that existence is pure joy, his magic reflects the will to power where Spare’s reflects the will to pleasure. There is much of taoism in Spare’s writings. Paradoxically, however, although female forms abound in his art, “the feminine” plays little part in his apparently misogynist writings. It is the spirit of his ideas which is so yin – as if the Feminine was working at the unconscious level in Spare whereas the Masculine was driving Crowley’s unconscious.

One example of the “yin” nature of Spare’s system is his emphasis on the importance of forgetting. In his system you have a desire, you devise an apparently meaningless sigil to encapsulate that desire, you exhaust yourself in a frenzy of activity until the only object remaining in consciousness is the sigil, you hold on to it until it has become charged with “free belief”, then you must do all you can subsequently to forget the original desire – for conscious desiring will impede the realisation of the sigil. This is the difficult bit. It is also rather puzzling because we find a big divide here in magical theory: those systems which emphasise the “not desiring” (eg Spare, taoism, zen) and those which advocate enflaming oneself with desire – as in Crowley’s instructions for devotion to a deity, or as in the “self help” systems which demand a constant affirmation of one’s objectives (I recall seeing an American lady doing Swedish drill while chanting “I MUST, I MUST, I MUST increase my BUST”). Both these extremes have a ring of truth, how can they be reconciled? It is not enough just to split the operation in two and say one needs to enflame oneself before it, and forget after – in traditional conjurations of the Holy Guardian Angel one goes on enflaming until success happens.

THE INNER AND THE OUTER

One possible explanation is that the distinction may reflect the difference between introversion and extroversion. The extrovert is positive to the outside world, and negative to the inner world. When the extrovert attempts “inner” work he finds it a crazy place like Alice’s looking glass world – you have to metaphorically walk backwards in order to move forwards. The introvert is much more at home in his inner world, but is more likely to be perplexed by the outer world: here the introvert finds that he has so often to go backwards in order to move forward. The introvert feels desire as such a vivid tangible force – perhaps more tangible than the actual object of desire – that the desire really does serve to block and render him impotent; thus the introvert is more often driven to using paradoxical methods in the outer world. This is in keeping with Eysenck’s idea of the extrovert as someone who needs greater stimulation to be effective, while the introvert needs to avoid overstimulation. If an extrovert wants his record in the charts he should plug it like crazy, but if the introvert wants to do the same he would do better to try to get the record banned! If the extrovert wants to become successful he should hang up “I’m the greatest” posters and constantly affirm his desire, while the introvert would do better to blow his desire on a sigil and then try so hard to fail that he eventually becomes an underground cult figure. Thus it seems that the magic of taoism and Spare is magic for introverts, while the out and invocatory stuff is better suited to the extrovert.

This is, of course, a gross oversimplification: no-one is pure extrovert or introvert; we are a mixture and so need to blend our magics. But it does suggest a useful concept to experiment with, and a possible answer to the problem that magic so often fails when the operator is too personally involved: if you wish to practice magic in a situation which seems very extroverted and “other” (like healing an unknown person at a distance), then you would well to “enflame yourself with prayer”. But if the matter is one which involves you very personally, then you would do better to follow Spare’s approach. Or perhaps the introvert would use Spare’s magic to operate on the outside world, and Crowley’s magic for inner working; while the extrovert needs Crowley’s magic for the outer and

Spare's on the inner? In either case, of course, the long-term object is to grow out of this slavery of the concept of intro/extroversion and start living!

MAGIC AND THE MAN

Another interesting point is the distinction between the magic and the man. Anyone studying Spare's magic books would expect the writer to be a sort of ascetic Zen master: "simplicity I hold most precious." He advocates simplicity, asceticism: "Bed, a hard surface; clothes of camel hair; diet, sour milk and the roots of the earth. All morality and love of women should be ignored." He rants against ritual magicians and all their parade and paraphernalia, but later in life he painted an altar piece for Grant's Nuit Isis Lodge and was prepared to do work for Gerald Gardner as described in Grant's Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare.

One answer is that many years had passed since his books were written – the man had changed. Another is that perhaps Spare was primarily just a channel for his magical ideas: someone to whom they were revealed but who never succeeded in fully realising them. Perhaps he too had difficulty in practising what he preached, being a man ahead of his time? His final chapter of The Book of Pleasure contains these words: "I... am impervious in purity (of self-love) – but I dare not claim its service! I am in eternal want of realisation... An opinionist, I fear to advocate an argument, or compromise myself by believing my own doctrines as such..." and so on.

The Austin Spare described by Kenneth Grant in his Images and Oracles sounds much more like a tribal shaman than a Zen master. Some people have asked, "which is the true Spare?" Grant actually knew Spare in his later years, so it is reasonable to assume that Spare was as he describes at that time, and we hear of Spare co-operating with ritual magicians, using such elaborations as an "earthenware virgin" for sex magic, and muttering incantations as part of his procedure – elements which play no part in the system as described in The Book of Pleasure.

So do we conclude that he was a changed man? That he had degenerated (or even advanced?) from the pure system he described to a form of shamanistic sorcery? Personally I prefer to accept Grant's overall view of him as a master shaman, and believe that through his innate skills he obtained an early vision of a new system of magic, a magic for the coming age. Rather than debating as to which was the true Spare, we should therefore look to him as a prophet rather than a perfect practitioner of his own system, and we should instead concentrate on developing the technology of that system for ourselves and for future generations. Is this not basically what the new school of magic known as "chaos magic" is all about?

CONCLUSION

If 1904 was indeed a revolutionary year, it is reasonable to ask if there are any astrological phenomena to support this. The most obvious one to strike me is the entry of Uranus (planet of upheaval) into Capricorn (sign of structures).

Once before since its discovery Uranus had entered Capricorn, in about 1820. This was

the year when Oersted demonstrated the link between electricity and magnetism – a revelation which was to have a profound effect on conventional ideas of physical reality.

Although I'm not aware of any great occult crisis at that time, James Webb (in *Flight from Reason*) did choose 1820 to mark the beginning of what he called "the Age of the Irrational". I suspect that the new electromagnetic theories of the time inspired the "etheric" occult terminology of the last century, just as Einstein's theories inspire the occultists of this century to talk of "other dimensions". But if the entry of Uranus into Capricorn was less significant in 1820, could it mean we are looking at a minor cycle which had exaggerated impact in 1904 because of an impending Aquarian age, or the transition to Crowley's "Aeon of Horus"?

Anyway, in late 1987 we are now at the end of the final or "twelfth house" phase of this Uranus in Capricorn cycle, making it a very suitable time for a major exhibition and re-evaluation of Spare's work before Uranus enters Capricorn again next February.

Is the convention of the age once more reaching its limit? And will 1988 be as fruitful as 1904 was?

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* This refers to the commentaries included in the essay "Spare Parts", a thorough introduction to the Sparean system of magic. This essay has been published in Uncle Ramsey's *Bumper Book of Magick Spells*, and other essays on science and magic.

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The Bookplate Designs of Austin Osman Spare
by Robert Ansell

Illustrations first published in AOS Ex-Libris, Keridwen Press, 1988

Although the contemporary myth of a young AOS as the enfant terrible of Edwardian art society has ensured his subsequent notoriety; in truth Spare was keen to court and encourage the patronage of collectors he viewed as supportive to his cause.

Nowhere is this more evident than in his designs for “ex-libris” - the small ownership labels fixed into books to denote the library of origin. This peculiar art form appealed to AOS, combining his love of books with art. The small format forced him to focus his expressive energies in imaginative ways, as may be seen in his designs for Andre Raffalovich (1910) and Pickford Waller (1908). Here too may be seen some of his finest

line work, reflected in his ex-libris for John Oswald (1909) and Sybil Waller (1909).

Although Spare's best work in this field appears between 1907 and 1910 he returned to the genre after the publication of *The Focus of Life* in 1921. These later designs, largely for his loyal patron Pickford Waller, fall into a period of intense introspection for Spare. Gone is the fine detail and recurring classical motifs of earlier work and instead we are offered satyrs and self-portraits amid swirling forms. Thus AOS chronicled his descent towards the publication of *Anathema of Zos* in 1927; and the death of patrons Pickford Waller and Desmond Coke in the early 30s.

It would be nearly 20 years before Spare undertook his final bookplate design, for the journalist Dennis Bardens, but throughout his career AOS relished not only designing printed ex-libris, but also exquisite hand-drawn examples. These he continued to execute for friends and patrons until the end of his life, often embellishing the book with his own distinctive brand of decoration as a special bonus. These unique ex-libris are the rarest of all his forays into this field and are the ultimate acquisition for every collector.

This list first appeared in *AOS Ex-Libris* (Keridwen Press, 1988) and has been edited and augmented for inclusion in the Fulgur Limited website.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris by AOS, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1905

Robed figures on plinth with books and figures at their feet. 135 x 85mm. Monogram. Printed in sepia.

Pickford Waller was Spare's most important patron, supporting him from his earliest days through until his death in 1930. This is the first design for Waller and contains some of the motifs that recur in Spare's work of the period: the slipped mask, the drama of curtained space, dragons, plinths and other classical references.

Desmond Coke Ex-Libris, 1907 Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

DESMOND COKE 1907

An array of objects befitting a collector, including silhouettes of the patron and artist. 157 x 98mm. Monogram.

Coke was a connoisseur and collector especially interested in silhouettes. His book *The Art of Silhouette* was published in 1913. He was a friend of Haldane MacFall and Claude Lovat Fraser, both contributors to Spare's journal *The Golden Hind*. Coke supported AOS until his death in Worthing in 1931.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris, c.1907. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER c.1907

Vine-tree with resident nymph bursting forth from root. 83 x 64mm. Monogram.

This design clearly shows the influence of Charles Ricketts, particularly his illustrations to Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* (Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1894)

Ralph Straus Ex-libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

RALPH STRAUS 1908

A library interior with an ostrich standing in foreground. 95 x 63mm. Monogram.

Here Spare employs a visual pun, as "Straus" is German for "ostrich". Straus was an earlier chronicler of Spare's work and his article on AOS appeared in *The Booklover's Magazine* in 1909

AOS Ex-Libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

AUSTIN O. SPARE 1908

Apollo and Daphne embracing, a plinth with a self-portrait bust to the right. 101 x 67mm. Monogram.

Inspired by his illustrations to C. F. Grindrod's *Songs from the Classics* (David Nutt, 1907) this design shows the genesis of Spare's lifetime obsessions: the interplay of the sexes, the bestial satyr representing atavistic experience, the power and myth of ancient culture, particularly Greece, and the ubiquitous self-portrait.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1908

A circular design with a self-portrait seated, surrounded by figures. 107mm diameter. Monogram

Robert Boss Ex-Libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

M. ROBERT BOSS 1908

A miscellany of books, pictures and figures, a cow looking rather majestic as a centrepiece. 110 x 64mm. Monogram.

Here Spare employs another visual pun, as "Bos" is Latin for "cow".

Elizabeth Murch Mitchell Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

E. MURCH MITCHELL 1909

A classical Greek figure holding a lyre. 101 x 47mm. Unsigned. Printed in red.

Elizabeth Murch Mitchell was one of Spare's childhood sweethearts. This design is very similar to those Spare drew for C. F. Grindrod's *Songs from the Classics* (David Nutt,

1907).

Cissie Spare Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

CISSIE A. SPARE 1909

As above. 101 x 47mm. Unsigned. Printed in green.

“Cissie” was the nickname given to Spare’s older sister, Susan Ann Spare.

AOS Bookplate, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE 1909

Self-portrait amid a sprouting “tree” of images, including Spare’s birth sign the Capricorn goat. 115 x 79mm. Monogram.

By 1909 Spare had two published works behind him and was developing towards *The Book of Pleasure*. Here his increasing confidence is evident. Rising from a sea of matter is an efflorescence of forms, including lizards, birds, flowers and a “botanical baby” - with a self-portrait central to the design. Here also may be found an early representation of the hand and eye motif.

John Oswald Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

JOHN OSWALD 1909

An Edwardian interior with a variety of sports equipment to the left. 119 x 77mm. Monogram.

The connoisseur John Oswald lived in St. James’ and doubtless would have attended Spare’s shows at the Ryder Gallery around this time. A highly detailed design and one of the few etchings Spare executed.

Sybil Waller Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

SYBIL WALLER 1909

A double-headed bird with flaming sceptre in background. 103 x 90mm. Monogram.

Pickford Waller’s only daughter was a keen admirer of Spare during her father’s lifetime. A friend of James Guthrie, author of the introduction to Spare’s *The Book of Satyrs*, she later affirmed her classical leanings with a book of poems and essays entitled *The Kingdom of Pan* in 1952.

Andre Raffavolich Ex-libris, c1910. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

ANDRE RAFFALOVICH c1910

A columbine formed from birds and a mask. 121 x 64mm. Initialled. Printed in sepia.

Raffalovich, a “wealthy patron of the arts and letters” (Sewell, Footnote to the Nineties, p.1) invited Spare to his home in Edinburgh in 1910. Here Spare produced some memorable work, including an accomplished self-portrait that Canon Gray, Raffalovich’s lifetime friend, gave as a bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This bookplate design, with its inventive simplicity, is arguably Spare’s finest contribution to the genre.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1912. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1912

A mallard evolving into a lily. 110 x 85mm. Signed with monogram.

Another zoomorphic design involving birds and flowers, a common theme of the period.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1921. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1921

A circular design of a reclining androgynous figure. 99mm diameter.

A woodcut by William Quick after A. O. Spare. Quick was responsible for engraving most of Spare’s woodcut designs. Eyes cast downward, androgynous and vulnerable, the figure is a self-portrait, and compares curiously with his self-portrait frontispiece to *The Focus of Life* published in the same year. In this image Spare’s face is obscured because his head is turned upward, whilst a strategically placed open book suggests sexual ambiguity.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1922. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1922

Self-portrait amidst flames. Original design 170 x 120mm. Initialled.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1922. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1922

Swirling masses with elfin self-portrait in foreground. 150 x 102mm. Initialled. Printed in sepia.

Grace Rogers Ex-libris, 1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

GRACE E. ROGERS c1923

Nude with ram’s head amid swirling forms. 141 x 102mm. Initialled.

Reproduced in *The Golden Hind*, Vol. 1 No. 4, July 1923.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1923

Bust of Pan on column amid swirling forms. 145 x 103mm. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 1, No. 4, July 1923

George Mackay Ex-libris, c.1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

G. H. R. MACKEY c1923

Self-portrait. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 5, October 1923

Ellen V. Spare Ex-libris, 1924. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

ELLEN V. SPARE c1924

Head amidst twisted landscape. Possibly never printed. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 6, Jan. 1924

Ellen V. Spare was Spare's youngest sister. Born in 1894, she became a professional artist illustrating fashion magazines and lived in Essex. They remained close until Austin's death.

George Mitchell Ex-libris, c.1924. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

GEORGE J. MITCHELL c1924

Self-portrait within swirling masses. Possibly never printed. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 6, Jan. 1924

Dennis Bardens Ex-libris, 1945. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

DENNIS BARDENS 1945

Portrait of Barden's head, decapitated and resting on a book. 102 x 71mm. Initialled.

Dennis Bardens, a journalist, met Spare in the mid 1930s and they became close friends. He orchestrated Spare's 1938 show in the Walworth Road studio and contributed an introduction to the catalogue. This is only the second ex-libris to include a portrait of the patron, the first being for Desmond Coke in 1907. Bardens and Spare remained friends until Spare died in 1956.

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Neither-Neither: Austin Osman Spare and the Underworld
by Marcus M. Jungkurth

First published in Austin Osman Spare, Artist, Occultist, Sensualist, Beskin Press, 1999

Whilst much has been written about Austin Osman Spare, the artist and the magician, the psychological impact of his work seems to have attracted little attention so far. Leaving aside for the moment his fine art or his outstanding portraits with all their poetic strength, we will instead focus on Spare's symbolic and magically inspired drawings many of which have to be interpreted in the light of his written work. As modern depth psychology has shown, the human unconscious mind expresses itself in images, metaphors and symbols (1) rather than in words or contents of concrete meaning. Dreams, of course, are one example for the symbolic expressions of the unconscious we are all acquainted with and, according to modern models of the human psyche, they do not only occur during sleep but continue during daytime underneath the waking consciousness even though we are rarely aware of it. The psychologist and writer James Hillman has even gone further claiming that each individual appears to be re-living some archetypal drama from ancient mythologies prevailing as a main theme underlying individual life. These strata reside within the depths of our unconscious and formulate the continuous dream-state by re-enacting the respective mythological theme. Besides outer factors like individual experience, social interaction and education which constitute the human personality, consciousness as a whole thus embodies on a deeper level also one or more of the archetypal figures (2). Myths are thus far more than just fairy-tales from mankind's remote past, they constitute a living reality in the life of modern man. Mythology is no doubt an important theme occurring over and over in Spare's work, and in the following we will try to analyse which archetypes seem to have had an especially strong impact on his life as an artist.

According to the model laid forth above, human consciousness is composed of a multitude of layers of simultaneous activity, the distinction between the conscious and the subconscious thus being a convenient but arbitrary mode of trying to draw a map of mind. Human consciousness is able to actively concentrate or focus on one level at a time only, which is why one is tempted to assume that all other planes are inactive in waking state, but actually we just shift our attention all the time. While walking on the street on the way home the dream, which we thought had ended when waking up, continues, while concentrating on the traffic, we listen to inner dialogs or recapitulate the day, and yet we perceive consciousness as a continuity by simply shifting the point of view as the need arises. Now some people, notably creative personalities and artists, have a natural affinity to also become aware of the other levels which for the most of us remain hidden, and thus it doesn't come as a surprise that Spare termed the unconscious "the storehouse of memories with an ever-open door". Especially artists by virtue of their ability to directly express their creativity through the unconscious often have access to those layers; besides the artist whose works this exhibition is showing, authors like H.P. Lovecraft or the contemporary artist H.R. Giger, to name but a few, spring to mind. The artist directly translates the raw material which is rising from his

unconscious into form and image, drawings or paintings, or clothes it in poetry, prose or music. "All geniuses have active sub-consciousness, and the less they are aware of the fact, the greater their accomplishments. Know the subconsciousness to be an epitome of all experience and wisdom, past incarnations as men, animals, birds, vegetable life, etc. etc., everything that exists, has and ever will exist" (4).

What separates nocturnal dream-sleep from an actual direct experience of the unconscious layers of mind is a very thin borderline only, and the crossing of this line has been aptly described as 'the journey to Hades' (3). As we know from classical mythology, the intervention of Hades invariably turns the world upside down; now phenomena are seen not only through the eyes of Eros and human life and love, but also through Thanatos: "Entering the underworld" refers to a transition from the material to the psychical point of view. Three dimensions become two as the perspective of nature, flesh and matter fall away, leaving an existence of immaterial, mirrorlike images, eidola ...the Greek word Eidolon signifying an image (2). Spare described the state when consciousness has crossed this fine line as Neither-Neither or Inbetween, "not this – nor that", out of which most notably his automatic drawings rose: "...the 'Neither-Neither' principle of those two, is the state where the mind has gone beyond conception ...The 'I' principle has reached the 'Does not matter – need not be' state, and it is not related to form. Save and beyond it, there is no other, therefore it alone is complete and eternal (4). The key to reaching this state is the attainment of a "total vacuity" of the conscious mind which concept is also an important part of Eastern religion such as the Buddhist path to enlightenment or Yoga and Tantra exercise. Spare seems to have been intuitively aware about the inherent dangers of his method, as he wrote total vacuity "is difficult and unsafe for those governed by morality, complexes" in which case an inflation of the unconscious followed by obsession is likely to occur. Spare's goal was to explore the strata of the un-conscious, the underworld, in a reverse evolutionary order in order to transcend the laws of cause and effect, thus to attain an absolutely pure and unadulterated state in which reality appears as truth as opposed to conception: "The law of Evolution is retrogression of function governing progression of attainment, i.e., the more wonderful our attainments, the lower in the scale of life the function that governs them." This retrogression was to reactivate the sentient atavisms of evolution still present in man, examples of which can again be seen in many of Spare's automatic drawings. Whilst this approach may seem to be directly opposed to the common idea that evolution consists of diversification and of structures getting increasingly complex, Spare's idea in some sense still fits many religious conceptions as, e.g., the Buddhist goal of reaching nirvana, nothing, by reducing the 'false' views and conscious constituents of mind gradually until nothing but absolute silence remains. Whether or not Spare succeeded in this respect, we will not attempt to judge in this place, but one of the apparent dangers of this special and highly original method Spare employed consists of the risk of becoming obsessed by whatever contents arise from the deepest levels of the unconscious or, to express it in more occult terms, fall prey to the spirits evoked in the accompanying states of trance. As Spare's "Note on the difference of Magical Obsession (Genius) and Insanity" (4) shows, he was well aware of this danger and therefore chose to consciously evoke magical obsession by using certain symbols or sigils which served as gateways to direct him to the unconscious

levels he wished to explore. His systematic approach to categorise the strata experienced led to the development of his "Alphabet of Desire" with each letter, itself composing a symbolic representation of an archetypal and primordial state, representing a well-defined original principle with a strong emphasis on sexuality: "Twenty-two in number, they correspond to a first cause. Each analogous to an idea of desire, and are a symbolic cosmogony. ... By knowledge of the first letter, one is familiar with the whole alphabet, and the thousands they imply. They are the knowledge of desire" (4).

Not only in Spare's automatic drawings, but also in his other work archetypal and mythological motives prevail. Already in Spare's rather early book *Earth Inferno* (5), we find the puzzling statement "Death is All", and as "Zos vel Thanatos" – one of his mottoes and title of his creed which so far remained unpublished – he identified himself with Thanatos, Death, which was also one of the bynames of the Greek underworld god Hades. As in the famous mythological motif of Hades' abduction and rape of Persephone which, as we have to remember, is not just psychopathy but a central initiatory mystery in the Eleusis myths, the archetype of Hades bears an intrinsic erotic component whilst, as indicated above, it is at the same time turning matters upside down. No wonder, then, that also in Spare's interior worlds Thanatos merges with Eros, the spirit and principle of life, who however in this context is to be regarded the brother of death and not the principle that will save us from it (3). Eros as an archetype also bears distinct female qualities relating him to the anima principle, both referring to the reflexive instinct which Jung associated with the basis of consciousness, and so he defined her as the archetype of life itself, as the personification which unconsciously involves us with larger collectivities of both inner and outer worlds (11). In this sense we can speak of the anima as the projection – making actor, the Shakti and the Maya that gives life to a person and in the artist serves as his muse. The concepts of death and sexuality are thus intimately interwoven which explains why in ancient mythology many of the early Goddesses like the Phoenician Astarte or even Aphrodite in Sparta and on Cyprus were both Goddesses of Love as well as of War and Death; many other examples can be found in Egypt, Mexico and Mesopotamia.

Spare's night-journey to the Witches' Sabbath led him to encounters not only with satyrs, ancient creatures and demons, but most notably with the dark side of the Great Mother, reminding us of the hero's travels through the Gates of Night as found in the myth of Ishtar, the Egyptian Book of the Dead or in Apuleius' famous description of the initiation into the mysteries of Isis. The symbolic reality of the terrifying female draws its images mainly from the interior world, the negative elementary character of the female expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images which do not originate in the outside world. Thus it becomes evident that the terrifying or monstrous female is a symbol of the unconscious itself. As Erich Neumann (5) has shown, the experience of the negative or evil side of the anima is part of the mystery of inner transformation by the annihilation of the male or patriarchal consciousness and the subsequent reincarnation out of the female womb. Again the motif of reduction or regression shines through, here by reaching back-wards to the cellular level of the very beginning of life itself. A destruction of traditional values occurs during this process, the ideals of beauty and harmony which

are too often but a by-product of society's current tastes, are turned upside down in order to release the anima or female within: "The desertion of the 'Universal Woman' lying barren on the parapet of the Subconscious in humanity; and humanity sinking into the pit of conventionality. Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit, and with it a resurrection of the Primitive Woman". (6) His identification of the "Universal Woman" – the mediatrix of the unknown acting as psychopompos – with the element of Earth underlines the dark aspect of his anima, her relation to death, decay and age, as the caverns of earth even in ancient times were both temples of initiation and tombs: the Great Mother taking all back into her what had originally emerged of her. Spare's encounters with his "Universal Woman", the luring quintessence of desire, with whom he "strayed into the path direct", led to the formulation of 'The new sexuality of ZOS', a sexuality not being limited to mere sensuality, but defined as pure cosmic consciousness embracing reality, freed from all convention and condition. For Spare, this woman, of whom actual woman was but an incomplete and distorted image, symbolized "all otherness", and to unite with her would lead to the realization and attainment of the Self. The anima's male counterpart, the animus, however remains strangely vague in Spare's work, he shows in zoomorphic forms or is reduced to partial representations as head or phallus. Whilst the androgynous figure, the divine hermaphrodite, as a symbol of the hieros gamos, the sacred marriage and reconciliation of the opposites, is an occasional motif in his drawings, it appears as idealized vision, cloudy and distant in its expression, as if not yet fully realized. One has the impression that especially during his later years, Spare embraced the left side of existence under the exclusion of the other half of reality, the whole of which he was no doubt longing for. Also his increasing withdrawal from the outer world can be understood as a sign of denial which often follows a one-sided identification with the interior worlds, the anima as the guiding spirit being responsible for depersonalisation, as it is her who provides the relationship between man and the world; depersonalisation must be distinguished from depression in this context, as it is less an inhibition of vital functions and the narrowness of focus than it is a loss of personal involvement with and attachment to self and world (10). Naturally one wonders whether this form of imbalance is not that which exactly constitutes the great artist, whether the resulting inner strain is not a prerequisite and driving force for artistic creativity. The creative genius rarely is a well-balanced individual as the biographies of countless renowned artists of the past clearly show.

Austin Osman Spare has left to us not only his extraordinary artwork which certainly makes him one of the most remarkable painters of his time, but also an interesting method and practical approach of gaining access to the unconscious. As, again, the unconscious ex-presses itself in symbolic ways only, art provides excellent means to enable us to enter communication with it. Besides other, more mental techniques like the active imagination, C.G. Jung also recommended to work with drawings or paintings as a means to get access to and express the archetypal contents of the psyche. Interestingly it does not matter whether the individual has artistic inclinations or not; to the contrary, the present author has found that the art created by the unconscious more often than not shows abilities and even technical skills the individual would not be capable to exhibit in the ordinary conscious state of mind. Spare developed a special technique which he called the 'Death Posture'-a drawing of the same title is the

frontispiece of his Book of Pleasure (4) – which he defined as “a simulation of death by the utter negation of thought” and which was to reactivate the deeply buried unconscious memories (9). In less uncanny terms the whole process can be roughly summarised as a silencing and drawing-in of the senses in order to become ‘empty’, a ‘vacuity’, so that all mental processes come to a halt. In nature any vacuum will not exist for long, *natura abhorret a vacuo*, as soon as the chance arises, it will fill itself; the vacuum within being attained, the archetypal contents are automatically drawn up, any conscious effort neither being necessary nor desired in order to avoid any censoring by the values of the conscious mind. The actual process Spare himself used to pass through when working with the Death Posture can easily be adapted according to individual needs and skills. For reaching a vacuity in the mind, a variety of Yoga exercises or meditations can be employed which we have already described elsewhere (7). A work-space with paper or cardboard, pencils, coal or ink is to be prepared beforehand; oil-based paints and the like should be avoided, as the contents usually arise quite sudden, and there will be no time for detailed and refined elaboration. As the reader will have noted, Spare’s automatic workings are coal and pencil drawings or have only later been worked out. The inner vacuity once being reached, the unconscious will immediately respond and express itself. You just have to wait and start to draw as soon as any image arises. Part of the present author’s personal work was to investigate and represent archetypal contents by means of art, and one of the most remarkable outcomes was that the artwork produced in the state of being “inbetween” opened a direct pathway to archetypes which could be made conscious also beyond the trance. Faces out of dreams, of the past long forgotten, the countenances of the inner male and female, ancient deities rose out of the trance, thus building a bridge between the underworld and upperworld uniting that which has been “divided for love’s sake, for the chance of union” (8). The recommendation to put this method into practice, very often yields a ‘I couldn’t do this, I have no talent’ as a reply – this is far from being true. We firmly believe that the artist is buried in each and every one of us, it is only matter of trustfully daring: “The soul has no language, levels or values, except its own, but it answers to all affectiveness” (9).

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Spare's night-journey to the Witches' Sabbath led him to encounters not only with satyrs, ancient creatures and demons, but most notably with the dark side of the Great Mother, reminding us of the hero's travels through the Gates of Night as found in the myth of Ishtar, the Egyptian Book of the Dead or in Apuleius' famous description of the initiation into the mysteries of Isis. The symbolic reality of the terrifying female draws its images mainly from the interior world, the negative elementary character of the female expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images which do not originate in the outside

world. Thus it becomes evident that the terrifying or monstrous female is a symbol of the unconscious itself. As Erich Neumann (5) has shown, the experience of the negative or evil side of the anima is part of the mystery of inner transformation by the annihilation of the male or patriarchal consciousness and the subsequent reincarnation out of the female womb. Again the motif of reduction or regression shines through, here by reaching back-wards to the cellular level of the very beginning of life itself. A destruction of traditional values occurs during this process, the ideals of beauty and harmony which are too often but a by-product of society's current tastes, are turned upside down in order to release the anima or female within: "The desertion of the 'Universal Woman' lying barren on the parapet of the Subconscious in humanity; and humanity sinking into the pit of conventionality. Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit, and with it a resurrection of the Primitive Woman". (6) His identification of the "Universal Woman" – the mediatrix of the unknown acting as psychopompos – with the element of Earth underlines the dark aspect of his anima, her relation to death, decay and age, as the caverns of earth even in ancient times were both temples of initiation and tombs: the Great Mother taking all back into her what had originally emerged of her. Spare's encounters with his "Universal Woman", the luring quintessence of desire, with whom he "strayed into the path direct", led to the formulation of 'The new sexuality of ZOS', a sexuality not being limited to mere sensuality, but defined as pure cosmic consciousness embracing reality, freed from all convention and condition. For Spare, this woman, of whom actual woman was but an incomplete and distorted image, symbolized "all otherness", and to unite with her would lead to the realization and attainment of the Self. The anima's male counterpart, the animus, however remains strangely vague in Spare's work, he shows in zoomorphic forms or is reduced to partial representations as head or phallus. Whilst the androgynous figure, the divine hermaphrodite, as a symbol of the hieros gamos, the sacred marriage and reconciliation of the opposites, is an occasional motif in his drawings, it appears as idealized vision, cloudy and distant in its expression, as if not yet fully realized. One has the impression that especially during his later years, Spare embraced the left side of existence under the exclusion of the other half of reality, the whole of which he was no doubt longing for. Also his increasing withdrawal from the outer world can be understood as a sign of denial which often follows a one-sided identification with the interior worlds, the anima as the guiding spirit being responsible for depersonalisation, as it is her who provides the relationship between man and the world; depersonalisation must be distinguished from depression in this context, as it is less an inhibition of vital functions and the narrowness of focus than it is a loss of personal involvement with and attachment to self and world (10). Naturally one wonders whether this form of imbalance is not that which exactly constitutes the great artist, whether the resulting inner strain is not a prerequisite and driving force for artistic creativity. The creative genius rarely is a well-balanced individual as the biographies of countless renowned artists of the past clearly show.

Austin Osman Spare has left to us not only his extraordinary artwork which certainly makes him one of the most remarkable painters of his time, but also an interesting method and practical approach of gaining access to the unconscious. As, again, the unconscious expresses itself in symbolic ways only, art provides excellent means to enable us to enter communication with it. Besides other, more mental techniques like

the active imagination, C.G. Jung also recommended to work with drawings or paintings as a means to get access to and express the archetypal contents of the psyche. Interestingly it does not matter whether the individual has artistic inclinations or not; to the contrary, the present author has found that the art created by the unconscious more often than not shows abilities and even technical skills the individual would not be capable to exhibit in the ordinary conscious state of mind. Spare developed a special technique which he called the 'Death Posture'-a drawing of the same title is the frontispiece of his Book of Pleasure (4) – which he defined as “a simulation of death by the utter negation of thought” and which was to reactivate the deeply buried unconscious memories (9). In less uncanny terms the whole process can be roughly summarised as a silencing and drawing-in of the senses in order to become 'empty', a 'vacuity', so that all mental processes come to a halt. In nature any vacuum will not exist for long, natura abhorret a vacuo, as soon as the chance arises, it will fill itself; the vacuum within being attained, the archetypal contents are automatically drawn up, any conscious effort neither being necessary nor desired in order to avoid any censoring by the values of the conscious mind. The actual process Spare himself used to pass through when working with the Death Posture can easily be adapted according to individual needs and skills. For reaching a vacuity in the mind, a variety of Yoga exercises or meditations can be employed which we have already described elsewhere (7). A work-space with paper or cardboard, pencils, coal or ink is to be prepared beforehand; oil-based paints and the like should be avoided, as the contents usually arise quite sudden, and there will be no time for detailed and refined elaboration. As the reader will have noted, Spare's automatic workings are coal and pencil drawings or have only later been worked out. The inner vacuity once being reached, the unconscious will immediately respond and express itself. You just have to wait and start to draw as soon as any image arises. Part of the present author's personal work was to investigate and represent archetypal contents by means of art, and one of the most remarkable outcomes was that the artwork produced in the state of being “inbetween” opened a direct pathway to archetypes which could be made conscious also beyond the trance. Faces out of dreams, of the past long forgotten, the countenances of the inner male and female, ancient deities rose out of the trance, thus building a bridge between the underworld and upperworld uniting that which has been “divided for love's sake, for the chance of union” (8). The recommendation to put this method into practice, very often yields a 'I couldn't do this, I have no talent' as a reply – this is far from being true. We firmly believe that the artist is buried in each and every one of us, it is only matter of trustfully daring: “The soul has no language, levels or values, except its own, but it answers to all affectiveness” (9).

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'Memories of a sorcerer': notes on Gilles Deleuze-Felix Guattari, Austin Osman Spare and Anomalous Sorceries

by Matt Lee, University of Sussex

My aim here is to introduce the philosophers Deleuze-Guattari to readers perhaps unfamiliar with their work and indicate something curious about their work, which is that it appears to have some sort of relation in a practical sense to the concept of the sorcerer. Whilst not a central figure in Deleuze and Guattari's work, the sorcerer and the witch are themes that do crop up in their texts more often than might be expected and play more than a simply 'metaphorical' role. I think that Deleuze and Guattari can provide a resource for those interested in sorcery, magic and witchcraft in two ways: firstly they can provide theoretical tools which can challenge or at least complement structuralist, constructivist and historicist accounts and so can be of use to researchers attempting to understand these phenomena; secondly, they can provide a theoretical resource for those within the magical community who at times attempt to theorise their practise with what are essentially philosophical concepts.

Gilles Deleuze

Series, structure and anomaly

Gilles Deleuze died in 1995, committing suicide through defenestration after having endured considerable physical difficulty with breathing. He was part of the French post-structuralist movement that consists of figures such as Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. He was always, however, a slightly oblique figure, never quite following the same lines of thought as his contemporaries. Like all the post-structuralists, he shared a concern with Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche but unlike his contemporaries Deleuze took his inspiration not only from Nietzsche but also from Hume, Spinoza and Bergson as well as numerous people 'outside' philosophy such as Gregory Bateson.

One of the driving forces of the 'post-structuralist' movement in philosophy was a 'theoretical anti-humanism'. This anti-humanism placed itself in opposition to any

thought that centred on Man as the primary analytical category. Deleuze's particular contribution focussed on developing concepts of 'immanence' and 'difference' which put forward a univocal ontology - that is, which put forward a unified being, a thought of life that has no 'outside' or 'duality' but which contains within itself its own means of development. This univocal universe is full of flux and becoming, a constantly shifting ocean of change. The role of Bergson in Deleuze's thought is to give him the means to make this 'univocal ontology' move and evolve; the ideas of a vitalism which can be found within Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, for example, play a critical role for Deleuze because they provide an organic model of the universe that corresponds to the philosophical ontology. John Marks has also noted that in Deleuze's work, "vitalism is a way of connecting with, of being in the presence of, this pre-individual world of flux and becoming" and thus vitalism forms a way of both modelling the universe as a universe of becoming that allows the creation of a way of thinking that enables us to understand this constant flux.

Vitalism is still, as it were, a model. It is an interpretation or account and there is then the problem of what a concrete vitalism of thought and life would mean. To this end Deleuze uses a concept of 'desire' as the name for the flow, which includes the flow through us. Desire, crucially, is not a desire for anything that is lacking, as in both Freud, Hegel and Lacan. Desire is a constituting activity of becoming, it is the individual current within the oceanic mass. In this essay, looking specifically at the practices of the sorcerer and their becomings, the streams of desire are something that the sorcerer will 'plug into'. "Becoming begins as a desire to escape bodily limitation" according to Brian Massumi and whilst this does not characterise all becoming it points to the practices of the sorcerer with which this essay is concerned.

Having sketched out the twin concepts of vitalism and desire in terms of their role within this essay I want to now turn to one of Deleuze's late works, written alongside the radical 'anti-psychiatrist' Felix Guattari, in order to explore becoming in more detail. Early in the seventies, Deleuze and Guattari had begun work on a two part work called 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', the first part of which was *Anti-Oedipus*, where the concept of desire is most apparent. The second part of 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', not published until the eighties, was called *A Thousand Plateaus*. I want to discuss 3 subsections of the tenth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus* that go under the heading, 'memories of a sorcerer'. I will first sketch a little of their context.

The three sections come within a chapter titled "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" which consists of 14 subsections, the first twelve of which are subtitled 'memories of' something. The chapter begins with a discussion that quickly leads to a distinction between series and structure. This distinction is between two different forms of analogy. Analogy is divided between analogy of proportion and analogy of proportionality, the first being the analogy of the series and the latter that of the structure. The analogy of proportion is of the form 'a resembles b, b resembles c,' and as such posits a first term from which resemblance originates, "a single eminent term, perfection or quality as the principle behind the series". The analogy of proportionality is of the form 'a is to b as c is to d'. In this form of

analogy there is no single series but rather a set of differences distributed across structures. The structure of 'a to b' and the structure 'c to d' and it is the differences between the elements that form the basis of an analogy. Whilst this may seem an obscure philosophical distinction it in fact represents two radically different forms of mapping the world. The first analogical structure of the series is assigned, as an example, to Jung and the notion of archetypes as analogical representations. In contrast with Jung the next figure in the text is Levi-Strauss, whose analysis of totemism brings forward, according to Deleuze and Guattari, a system of internal homologies rather than external resemblances. What fundamentally shifts when employing one form of analogy or another is the emphasis in the analysis and understanding of the forms under observation. In the former case we attempt to observe relations of identification or identity between terms, whether a resembles b and perhaps, through a series of steps, whether we can connect a to z. In the case of the structural approach we examine not the terms in themselves but rather the relations between terms. It is precisely this method that we would employ if we were to approach the translation of a symbolic system we thought of as an unknown language. The alphabetical series of a language would be constructed through discovery of internal homologies, which would begin to assign positions within the system to the elements based upon the existing knowledge of known languages.

These two systems, of series and structure, offer modes of becoming. To understand this, first think of the distinction between a difference in kind and a difference of degree. A difference in kind poses a break between the differentiated elements, forming different sorts of things. A difference in degree poses a difference between elements within a kind, measurable according to a unified criterion. There are, for example, differences of degree between temperatures but differences in kind between temperatures and pressures even though these two structures can be brought into formulaic relation under the laws of physics. The first system we are looking at then, of a series based upon resemblance, offers a basic ontology of continuity, with differences organised according to degree; whereas the second system, of structural relations, posits a pluralistic or regional ontology with differences of kind, in particular between 'Man and Animal'. In passing, however, we can note two ways in which these analogies might organise an understanding of magic. In terms of a series, whose pre-eminent term might be rational control of nature or something along those lines, we could argue that magic resembles science in its attempts to establish control or understanding of nature. Its resemblance is such that magic might be said to be 'lower' in form than science but might be assimilated into the history of science as a pre-cursor in a process aiming at the same goal. It would thus be brought within a 'historical series' that posited a particular goal or end point to progress. Alternatively we might say that magic plays a structurally identical role to science within a particular society, operating as a sort of technology that we understand as different from, but again assimilable to, our own culture. The first account would be one of series, the second one an account of structures.

Deleuze and Guattari, however, suggest that the two forms of structure and series both ignore or reject something fundamental which can be named as the anomalous. In particular, whilst these two forms of understanding may well prove useful, Deleuze and

Guattari asks whether “there is still room for something else, something more secret, more subterranean: the sorcerer and becomings (expressed in tales instead of myths or rites)?”. The sorcerer is introduced at this point as the figure of the anomaly. This can be perceived as simply a metaphorical use of the term ‘sorcerer’ and whilst a metaphorical use is indeed part of what is going on, ‘metaphor’ is a poor word to describe what Deleuze and Guattari are doing. Their method is to use ‘conceptual personae’ to express concepts, figures through which a philosophical concept is described and ‘diagrammed’. The sorcerer is central to their thought as just such a conceptual persona.

The figure of the sorcerer is introduced alongside what are called ‘blocks of becoming’, which are these anomalous events indicated by the date in the title of the chapter, 1730. “From 1730 to 1735, all we hear about are vampires”. This is an example for Deleuze and Guattari of the blocks of becomings. These blocks of becomings are not fixed points from which something becomes something else - this is the central aspect of their argument. The blocks of becomings in this particular instance are what Deleuze and Guattari will call ‘becoming-animal’.

The role of the animal within shamanic practice and as an aspect of the sorcerers art is indisputable in its existence if not in its exact function. Brian Bates, in his attempt to reconstruct an ‘indigenous’ neo-shamanic practice of the British Isles cites an example of ‘animal workings’. He first suggests, using the divinatory role of the crow as an example, that there was a central role for animals within the world view of the Anglo-Saxon world of the first millennium and from which he is drawing his inspiration. After a brief ‘universalist’ move in which he suggests other more contemporary indigenous cultures also have a clear role for animals with shamanic practice, he then suggests that there is an inherent alienation in the way in which we have divorced ourselves from animals and asks how we might work to “re-establish a degree of connection, identification, respect and even a sense of the sacred presence of animals”. Bates is not unaware of the problem of ‘pretence’ in any attempt to work with ‘finding a power animal’, that is, establishing some sort of sacred or magical-shamanic link with an animal. As he says, “done superficially it simply confirms our casual attitude towards the animal world, and our propensity to use animals like a psychological fast-food dispenser: instant guardian animal”. What Bates carries out is a six month long program of meditation, imaginal activity, visualisation and practical association. The critical climax of Bates’ account comes when he describes a session in which a participant is associating with a bear. She is engaged in what Deleuze and Guattari call a ‘becoming’, in this instance a ‘becoming-bear’. Bates says, “when she walked into the room, on all fours, and then sat back on her haunches, she was a bear - her ‘performance’ transcended mimicry; it was much more than the sum of its parts”.

Bates’ account, makes a claim to a transcendence of mimicry. This opens up the problem of the ‘reality’ of the situation as well as the problem of our belief in this reality. Was she really, in any sense, a bear? The issue of belief and truth is still embedded within studies of shamanism and to a large extent is always posed when looking at magical practice rather than the history or theory of magical texts. Alan T. Campbell

draws on a distinction from the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre when approaching this issue. MacIntyre, he says, distinguishes between understanding and belief, "making the point that an effort of understanding has inevitably to be made from the outside. If you're already a 'believer' there's no 'understanding' effort required. It's because we don't believe that we have to make the interpretative effort". MacIntyre's distinction is made in the context of Christian religion and in the tradition of 'rational theology' but it echoes a sceptical problem articulated very simply in a distinction drawn by Wittgenstein: "The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty". The whole game of questioning reality, if taken as a game of doubting, puts the issue of belief in the foreground. This is the sceptical cul-de-sac. To begin from a position in which disbelief in the phenomena prompts an attempt to understand it is to engage in a form of delusion itself, to cover over our own presuppositions contained in the worldview within which we are inevitably - always, already - situated. Issues of belief and the reality of the phenomena will rapidly fall into the dichotomy of the believer/understander, the insider/outside. We will find ourselves in an endless ramified series of questions about whether it is real, whether it be spirits, magic or the sorcerers practice itself. These are, in many ways, false problems.

The task is not to question whether what is happening is real, is out there, a 'fact' or objective thing, but to pursue further the question of 'what is happening'. The serial/structural models might aid in one way in cultural and historical analysis, but I have already suggested that Deleuze and Guattari argue that these will avoid the anomalous, precisely those events which seem the most 'unreal'. It is as a 'strategy of understanding' that the notion of a block of becoming might prove useful. The analysis of these blocks of becoming, as they pose them, have no beginning point or end point and thus no substantive realities or objects whose reality status needs assigning. It the wrong question to ask whether the woman is in fact a bear, since this simply confuses the block of becoming, in this case a becoming-bear, with the reality or object that we might call 'bear' within a different context. "Becoming is never imitating".

Blocks of becoming and the role of the pack

The blocks of becoming produce no end result. We do not engage in a becoming-animal in order to end up as an animal, even temporarily, or in the imagination, or on a spiritual level. The blocks of becoming produce nothing other than themselves, neither belonging to a subject (I become) nor ending in an object (a bear). This is the first claim; "Becoming produces nothing other than itself". What then are these blocks of becoming? They are processes and activities, but they are not of the imagination, nor are they phantasies, rather they are real in themselves, "perfectly real". It is not a question of imitation because this simply avoids the matter of the becoming itself. We must stay with the phenomena and not assume its reality somehow depends on anything outside itself, either a subject or a term. This is the second claim, "the principle according to which there is a reality specific to becoming". Finally, becomings do not operate through 'filiation', that is, they cannot claim some sort of serial link to an object or image which they resemble either more or less. Rather there is another process that is in play, a process of alliance. It is not a matter of "establishing corresponding relations" such as the macrocosm-microcosm model, but is carried out

by a form of folding activity, in which connections, networks of involvement and intertwining are the methods in an activity that is not an evolution but rather what Deleuze calls an involution: "Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative". Three claims are evident then; (1) becomings produce only themselves, (2) becomings are perfectly real and (3) becoming is an involutionary and thus creative process.

This is the background to the three sections of the tenth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the rough outline of the route up to the 'Memories of a Sorcerer' sub-sections and I want to now look at the figure of the sorcerer within these sub-sections. Certain aspects of the text will have to be passed over, notably certain particular formulations that would involve me in a far too slow and detailed reading taking me beyond the subject of this essay. One of these tropes or formations within the text is worth noting, however, and that is the way in which they identify with the sorcerer. They use the phrase 'we sorcerers' in critical places within the text; in the first 'memory', where they identify a type of knowledge, in the second memory where they deal with a contradiction and in the third 'memory' where they identify a particular practice or method. They also use the phrase 'fellow sorcerers' in the first memory when describing their 'way'. It is worth bearing these identifications in mind in the following account of the argument within the sections under question.

We begin, we sorcerers, with the pack, Deleuze and Guattari argue. "A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity". This is one of the first principles of much of their thought, this notion of a multiplicity, which differs from a multiple in that a multiplicity is singular and not composed of simply numerable elements. A multiplicity is, albeit slightly simplistically, a whole greater than its parts. This must be understood quite literally, in the sense of packs, swarms, shoals and mobs or crowds where an animal might be said to take on a different form from the more common model of the individual particular; the specific animal is, in this sense, transcended or gone beyond when in a pack mode. Crucially the pack is not some sort of stage within an evolution, which is why I specifically mentioned crowds and mobs. For Deleuze and Guattari "every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack". The distinction that is being motivated is in terms of understanding animals in terms of modes of multiplicity not simply characteristics of the multiple. It is in terms of these modes that we encounter the animal.

At this point the argument draws on an example from H.P. Lovecraft and his story of Randolph Carter in *Through the gates of the silver key*. Deleuze and Guattari, calling this one of Lovecraft's masterpieces, recount a passage from section 4 of the story, where a multiplicity of Randolph Carters' come pouring forth. Just before the passage quoted we find Lovecraft describing Randolph Carter's realisation as he passes through the 'Ultimate Gate'. "Now, beyond the Ultimate Gateway, he realised in a moment of consuming fright that he was not one person, but many persons". This passage, pointing explicitly to a notion of a multiplicity of selves, which would be understood as a mode of the human animal, reveals something of the role of the becoming-animal within Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. The ability to access this mode of multiplicity is what is meant by sorcery.

What we see throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* is this entanglement between philosophical arguments and examples from fiction. Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily upon literature as a resource for their work. Is the sorcerer, then, simply another name for the writer? "If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming". Yet the becomings are not a becoming something specific; they are not, for example, a becoming-writer. It is, rather, that the writers Deleuze and Guattari draw upon work with the method of becoming that belongs pre-eminently to the figure of the sorcerer. In particular the writer and the sorcerer, the writer as sorcerer, work with "feelings of an unknown Nature", called affects. This affect is a positive created force, a power that derives directly from the pack, from the mode of the animal as pack and which brings forth the multiplicity that will throw "the self into upheaval and make it reel".

The first memory sub-section focuses, then, on the pack and the multiplicity. One danger might be to think this pack in terms of tribe or filial community and associated with the notion of pack goes a second characteristic or 'principle'. "A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? It is quite simple; everybody knows it, but it is discussed only in secret. We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity". The object at this point is to try and establish certain principles of method and understanding and to break down or pose alternatives to ideas of series and structure, of lineages. The pack, as multiplicity, works on a level of multiplicities, whereby it spreads through contagion. These two principles form, for Deleuze and Guattari, the path that any becoming-animal will take. A counter-principle is next put forward or rather a counter-point, where each multiplicity will express the 'exceptional individual'. This will be the anomaly.

Whilst every animal has a mode as pack and packs propagate through contagion, each pack will also contain its anomaly or anomalous point. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit in that this seems to pose a contradiction to the model they are putting forward of the process of becoming. If we begin from multiplicities then how can we logically reach a concept of the 'exceptional individual'? It is a contradiction to put forward both the multiplicity and the exceptional individual. "We sorcerers know quite well that the contradictions are real but that real contradictions are not just for laughs". What is meant by the anomalous? It is first pointed to by again bringing in Lovecraft and his 'Outsider' or Thing, "teeming, seething, swelling, foaming, spreading like an infectious disease, this nameless horror". The exceptional individual is in fact not a specific, singular individual; Deleuze and Guattari explicitly proffer the term 'individual' only to retract it as they develop their concept, putting forward the idea that this 'individual' is in fact the focus of the affects they earlier brought into the discussion. This is why Lovecraft provides such a perfect example of description in that the Thing, the nameless horror, whilst individuated and specifiable to a degree is not in any sense an 'individual' with a sense of continuous self, nor even a physically specific identity.

The anomalous accompanies each multiplicity and this anomalous is in fact nothing other than the "phenomenon of bordering". The anomalous is the specific point at which the pack is divided along a line, where an edge is seen. The difficulty with this concept is that it includes both the situation of an alpha individual within a wolf pack and the

situation of mosquitoes in their swarm. There are, it is clear, very different forms of this anomalous individual. It may be a specific animal that divides the pack into left and right, and the alpha wolf, with the pack streaming to the sides in something resembling a flight formation, is a strong image that might be drawn on in this situation. We would see the same thing again in the swarming rats, flowing over the banks and ditches of a woodland and James Herbert's stories of *The Rats* always feature some sort of over-large, over-intelligent or over-vicious individual that has taken the swarm into a new place, transforming them into a murderous beast of many forms. Within the mosquito swarm, and perhaps the same with flocking birds, the position of the anomalous individual is constantly shifting and the specific individuals flow through this role of the anomalous individual in turn as they become the edge of the whole. It is worth noting that there is no real hint of a leadership within this anomaly and at the point at which the anomalous is assigned to a position of hierarchy, as is the danger in the example of the wolf alpha structure, we find the concept of the pack being transformed again into the state. It is this curiously difficult distinction in collectivities that Deleuze and Guattari are aiming at. The pack may become the state, the family, the group but in itself is more than these more rigid structures; the pack is a mobile multiplicity, spreading through contagion and with a border formed through anomaly.

"The relation with the anomalous is one of alliance. The sorcerer has a relation of alliance with the demon as the power of the anomalous". At this point Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to locate the sorcerer within this conceptual structure of multiplicities within which there is a clear and rather privileged place for the sorcerer. This world consists of multiplicities, what are called at other times aggregates, which might be visualised as crowds, mobs, swarms or packs. There are many of these, at every level, from the cellular to the stellar, forming a vision of an interlocking, chaotic soup of multiplicities. The primary form of 'communication' and change or exchange between these multiplicities is via contagion, through infection or transformation or the one multiplicity by the other, across borderlines. These borderlines form a continuously changing series of edges, which trace out lines of rapid communication from one area to another and it is in these borderlines that we find the sorcerer and where one must go to become a sorcerer. The borderlines are the constant critical areas of becoming. The reason for alliance is that the borderline poses a need to be at once on both sides. To even know that the edge exists it is necessary to have stepped over but in such a way that it is not simply forgotten. Moving from one aggregate to another, whilst it may involve a border crossing, will never produce awareness of the border except as a memory, almost a necessary memory. The alliance provides the means by which the sorcerer is capable of living at the border, since it enables a relation with both sides that enables the border to actually exist as a becoming that is no longer reduced to its terms, to either one side or the other, one thing or another.

This analysis of the sorcerous sections of Deleuze and Guattari's work needs one final addition before moving on. The overall structure of the analysis Deleuze and Guattari give is one that wants to retain the reality peculiar to becomings. These realities are what Deleuze and Guattari call the blocks of becoming. These blocks of becoming are multiplicities within wider structures of borderline or liminal contagion. The blocks of

becoming have no 'beginning' or 'end' point but their dynamics are, however, capable of being further understood as being between the molecular and the molar. These are not opposites within a single structure but differences in kind. As John Marks says, "the distinction between the molar and the molecular is not a distinction of scale; it is qualitative rather than quantitative". The molar is the level of the organised, where we might find the state, whereas the molecular is the realm of desires' flux and flows. The tension touched upon above, where the pack might become the state, is precisely what happens when the pack becomes molar, organised and static, in effect ceasing to be a pack. The multiplicity of the pack is a molecular multiplicity.

Deleuze and Guattari do not provide simple models for analysis. What they do provide is a concerted attempt to bring forward working models for a mobile philosophy, a philosophy of becoming. As such they provide a huge resource for the study of phenomena of change and transformation, such as the study of liminal phenomena, of which sorcery and shamanism are key examples. They attempt to provide a systematic way in which we might study such phenomena, although the systems they attempt to establish are open systems. Deleuze argues in an earlier collection of interviews "a system's a set of concepts. And it's an open system when the concepts relate to circumstances rather than essences".

The anomalous becomings of sigils

The concept of becomings, including becoming-animal, is only one concept amongst the open system of Deleuze and Guattari's work. Another fundamental concept, motivated primarily by Deleuze, is the emphasis on a fully affirmative philosophy, one that breaks with the dialectic of Hegelian philosophy, the central tool of which is the power of negation. This philosophy of the affirmative that Deleuze and Guattari push forward might, with minor reservations, be said to be a Dionysian-Ariadnean philosophy. From this point connections with a sorcerer such as Spare can be traced out, starting from the "point of transmutation or transvaluation" that is central to this Nietzschean inspired affirmation of affirmation. One possible way of thinking this connection is of two different dynamics coalescing around this point of transmutation, one inspired by theory (the philosopher), the other by practice (the sorcerer).

Having given a brief and theoretical account of an element of the work of Deleuze and Guattari I want then to turn to a specific example of magical practice in the form of the work of Austin Osman Spare. Spare has become increasingly well known over the last few years because of his association with a form of sorcery that is known as 'chaos magic'. Spare came into the occult scene at the turn of the twentieth century, publishing his first book of text and illustrations, *Earth Inferno*, in 1905. He is reported to have briefly become a member of Aleister Crowley's magical order, the *Argenteum Astrum* (A.A.). Apparently Crowley made the comment "Artist: can't understand organisation" with regard to Spare, perhaps indicating a temperament unsuitable to the structures of the A.A. Spare's own comments on ceremonial magicians within *The Book of Pleasure* betray a little more hostility to the ceremonial magics of Crowleyian and Golden Dawn traditions however: "Others praise ceremonial magic, and are supposed to suffer much ecstasy! Our asylums are crowded, the stage is overrun! Is it by symbolising we

become the symbolised? Were I to crown myself King, should I be King? Rather should I become an object of disgust and pity. These Magicians, whose insincerity is their safety, are but the unemployed dandies of the Brothels”.

The Book of Pleasure is perhaps Spares’ principal work and what is interesting in the comment above, aside from the obvious hostility to a particular form of magic, is the no less obvious methodological objection to the role of symbol and symbolisation within magic. It is important to distinguish very clearly Spare’s form of sigilisation from any traditional notion of symbolism. There are a number of models that can be distinguished: a symbol can stand for something; it can point to something; it can contain something or it can communicate something. In each situation the symbol is essentially an adjunct of ‘something’, which we might describe as its’ meaning. In essence the symbol is not the meaning but rather has a meaning and the basic structure is one of being a medium or container for this essential, non-symbolic reality. William Gray, for example, asks after the nature of a symbol and says, “in effect it is the good old ‘outward sign of inward grace’, or a practical link between objective and subjective existence. It is a body containing a soul, matter holding a meaning, a focus of force, a condenser of consciousness or a ‘thought-tank’.” To a large extent, of course, these accounts of the symbol as tool are practical and true - we do, in fact, use symbols in exactly this way. This factual use of symbols does not, however, imply that this is in principle the only way symbols can be used. The fact that symbols are used as tools does not imply that either they are tools or that they must be tools.

Spare uses symbols in a way that is far closer to an artistic use of stroke or colour. The paint stroke does not stand for, contain, transmit or somehow make us able to see the real picture behind the strokes and colours but is in fact the picture itself. This process is a manifestation or creation. It is an act itself, not a means. This active symbolisation disturbs the very concept of symbols themselves, with a split in Spare’s work between ‘symbols’ and ‘sigils’. In The Book of Pleasure Spare focuses explicitly on the construction of both symbols and sigils. It is in one of the sections on sigils, subtitled ‘the psychology of believing’, that we find the following: “We are not the object by the perception, but by becoming it”. This shift from perception to becoming signals a connection with a Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy.

It is worth, at this point, placing the techniques Spare motivates within The Book of Pleasure inside the more general ‘metaphysical’ schema with which he operates. This centres on the two names KIA and ZOS, hence the name of the ‘Zos-Kia Cultus’, the magical ‘current’ or ethos associated with Spare as well as with Kenneth Grant and later, via Peter Carroll’s work, with the Illuminates of Thanateros, the central magical order in the ‘chaos magic current’.

Carroll suggests, in his work Liber Null, “the twin functions of will and perception is called Kia by magicians. Sometimes it is called spirit, or soul, or life force, instead”. He goes on to say of Kia that it “is the consciousness, it is the elusive ‘I’ which confers self-awareness but does not seem to consist of anything itself. Kia can sometimes be felt as ecstasy or inspiration, but it is deeply buried in the dualistic mind”. Magic,

therefore, is for Carroll, “concerned with giving the Kia more freedom and flexibility and with providing means by which it can manifest its occult power”.

Now Carroll is writing a working grimoire or grammar of magic, focused on a practical orientation, and as such his metaphysics is simply there to assist in the establishment of such a practical end. These comments on Kia are little more than a pragmatic use of certain names that enable the magician to explain to the student the basics of their working activity. For example, the fact that Carroll says that ‘magicians’ use the name Kia is in many ways disingenuous if you were looking for an accurate historical reading, since Spare is the principle magician to initiate the term. More importantly, though, Carroll’s metaphysic converts Kia into a force which the magician then harnesses or expresses through their activity, enabling the new-comer to the field of magic to place their activity back within some sort of cause-effect paradigm, except this time one that relies upon the great life-force Kia, rather the laws of physical nature.

Spare, however, has a slightly more subtle and in many ways more interesting role for Kia within his work, particularly if the focus is maintained on *The Book of Pleasure*. Within this text Kia, whilst possibly a ‘life force’ is perhaps more adequately described as life itself. “Anterior to Heaven and Earth, in its aspect that transcends these, but not intelligence, it may be regarded as the primordial sexual principle, the idea of pleasure in self-love”. This Kia, then, has numerous ‘aspects’, of which one is creativity itself, creation as process rather than object or product - Kia in this aspect takes the place of any ‘creator’ and it is this removal of the role of the creator that is central. Kia is self-manifesting. It is, in this regard, akin to what Deleuze calls ‘difference’, which is not a difference from or between anything but which is immanence itself, not immanent to anything. This is a form of pantheism before theism, a self-moving universe, a vitalism.

The basic worldview or ontology of Spare relies upon a vitalism that is shared with Deleuze. Of course, this vitalism is something Deleuze picks up from thinkers such as Bergson and so the similarities extend beyond Deleuze and Guattari. It is, however, the connection of the vitalism with the technique of a concrete embodiment of desire within the sigil that draws Spare and Deleuze and Guattari closer still. Spares’ techniques are fundamentally techniques of becoming. The difference of emphasis that is found when drawing Sparean Sigilisation towards Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming is fundamentally away from the problem of belief. To focus on techniques of becoming is to shift the emphasis away from simply ‘removing’ beliefs into a more positive activity. The removal or dissolution of beliefs is still a central theme in Spare but work on belief structures is nothing more than a pre-requisite for the techniques of becoming.

The ‘primordial sexual principle’, for example, is what Spare refers to as ‘the new sexuality’, which the technique of the ‘death posture’ is intended to access. This is a form of meditation, both physical and mantrical, using the formula of “Neither-Neither” to attain a state described as “Does not matter - need not be” which is formless. Called ‘the death posture’ because it aims to create “the dead body of all we believe” the intention behind this meditative practice is the removal of belief, both in content and form. Whilst the chaos magic current uses a technique called ‘paradigm shifting’ in order

to break down ego structures, this is often posed in terms of a technique to break free from 'consensual reality'. This technique, whilst practical, rests upon an apparent paradox, in that it seems that the magician believes in their ability to not believe and as Julian Vayne suggests, "the chaos magick system rests upon a paradox. Namely that the system claims that 'nothing is true' and yet itself emerges from the 19th century attempt to create a grand theory of magick".

In this sense chaos magic rests upon an attempt to negate or suspend belief, an odd situation akin to philosophical scepticism. Philosophical scepticism, however, has a number of forms, one of which is Pyrrhonism, elucidated by writers such as Sextus Empiricus, where the aim of the sceptical process is a condition of bliss known as ataraxia, which follows the suspension of belief, known as epoche. This ataraxia is a state of quietude. It allows a release from scepticism through pursuing it to its end, in such a way that the sceptical doubt that is so easily established with regard to knowledge claims no longer has its disorientating power to produce a nihilism of belief. Whilst Spare's work at times resembles a powerful form of scepticism it would be rather strange to suggest that the aim is a form of quietude. In fact it would be more accurate to say that the techniques Spare puts forward produce exactly the opposite of a quietude, what might be called a form of orgiastic consciousness, which is this strange thing he calls 'the new sexuality'. This is an expanded and increased creativity, not a settled and contemplative quietude.

Is this right, however, since Spare talks about the Kia as the 'Atmospheric I'? Kenneth Grant reads Spare as close to a Ch'an or Zen like contemplation, "the adepts of which do not permit the mind to adhere to any of its thoughts". Although this is a claim that would need considerably more substantiation, my own feeling is that Spare's magical philosophy may resemble a Taoist rather than a Buddhist, even a Zen Buddhist, approach, where the activity on belief is less a process of negation and deconstructing than a process of freeing up and allowing a full flow of life. This is a subtle difference but may be said to be a question of whether the focus is on removing the ego and dissolving the self or whether it is on the expression of a fuller pre-individual life, such that the question of the ego or self is, in some ways, secondary, to the reality of manifesting an orgiastic consciousness. "So long as the notion remains that there is 'compulsory bondage' in this World or even in dreams there is such bondage".

The therapeutic approach that may be found within the Pyrrhonian sceptic and which I would also suggest lies at the heart of 'ego-negating' strategies perceives, in the first instance, a problem to be overcome, a problem of the ego, the self. Removing or destroying belief results in a form of nihilistic scepticism, provoking spiritual crises that once more call forth therapies of quietude and acceptance. One of the key themes within Deleuzian thought is a struggle against such strategies of negation. The emphasis on strategies and models of becoming presupposes a fluid structure to belief but doesn't believe this to be anything other than a forerunner to a creative process. The struggle against belief is only necessary, after all, if belief restricts something and to forget what it is that is restricted, the impulse behind the struggle against belief, is to end in the nihilism against which Nietzsche warned.

For example, despite all the techniques that seem to deny belief in Spare's work, contained within a formula of 'Neither Neither', this is not a negation. It is a subtle shifting away from any 'belief' but it does not allow any duality to exist, no 'not X'. It prevents negation with suspension, hence the suggestion that it is in fact close to the epoche of the sceptics, a technique which also lies at the heart of Edmund Husserl's 'phenomenology' in which the epoche is used to suspend the 'natural attitude'. Spare's attitude to belief is in fact an attempt to free it up, as it were, from restrictions placed upon it by the consciousness, not an attempt to simply remove or deny it. It is, in essence, a technique of allowing the becoming of belief. "Belief, to be true, must be organic and sub-conscious".

It is to achieve this organic belief that the technique of sigilisation is introduced. In effect the sigils are not symbols containing anything, but rather they are expressions in which we consciously carry out specific operations in such a way as to allow an intuitive sub-conscious or pre-conscious desire to manifest. It re-orientates the sorcerer away from an ego centred strategy since the magician is never, in principle, capable of really knowing their desire except on this sub-conscious level. This sub-conscious level is pre-individual. It is not beneath or below or created through the ego or super-egoic structures but prior to and more fundamental than these. This is strongly akin to Deleuze's account of consciousness as a 'transcendental field' that "can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn't refer to an object or belong to a subject". In itself this transcendental field is nothing more than a "pure plane of immanence" that is constituted as a transcendental field by the production of the transcendent entity that is 'consciousness'. The pure plane of immanence - the great ocean of becoming - cares nothing for consciousness and only becomes a 'transcendental field' when it produces consciousness as an effect. Beneath all the currents of thought is the ocean from which they arise and into which they fall back, an ocean of becoming that has no concern with anything other than its own becoming. Consciousness in effect becomes a sort of self-defeating capacity when it is used to fulfil life; it is a detour, which we must consciously step back from. We, of course, have in principle no ability to know beforehand quite where or how this might be carried out - hence the need to employ an experimental approach. Sigilisation marries a true experimentalism of automatic drawing with the conscious thought that 'this X is our desire', a desire no longer possessed by us but by which we are possessed. Spare is Deleuzian in the sense that he no longer wants a focus on the 'magician' as controller, perceiver or creator. Sparean sorcery is a technique not of ego dissolution but of practical experimentation with a pre-individual plane of immanence, the ocean of becoming.

"The Sigil being a vehicle, serves the purpose of protecting consciousness from the direct manifestation of the (consciously unacknowledged) obsession, conflict is avoided with any incompatible ideas and neither gains separate personality" Spare says and it is this subtle fictionalisation process that is the true heart of the sigilisation process. What is anomalous in Spare's sigilisation process is that it is a paradoxically conscious practice aimed at releasing the sub-conscious: it is, in effect, a deliberate attempt to consciously do something that can't be done consciously. It is an attempt to plug into

the orgiastic consciousness, the Sparean sub-conscious, in an experimental, structured and repeatable operation.

Molecularity and becoming

At this point I want to try and draw the threads of this essay together, through the notion of becoming as an experimentation. Deleuze and Guattari provide a model through which we might approach becoming on its own terms. This accomplishes, in a different manner, a similar goal to that put forward in Spare with regard to belief. This is a process of stepping outside the problem of belief. Once this is done another positive problem can be posed, the problem of creation and becoming. Deleuze and Spare share two fundamental aspects in their positive thought and practice. Firstly, they both work with a model of a universe of becoming and secondly they share the attitude that the appropriate technique in such a world is experimentation.

In *The Book of Pleasure* we find a sort of 'definition' statement by Spare: "Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times". This is the process I have called 'plugging into an orgiastic consciousness', which makes fluid the concepts of matter, thought and being, in such a way that limitations are little more than temporary boundaries of actuality, not possibility. It is both a practical and a theoretical process, one which Spare calls 'magic' and which, in a Deleuzian vein we might call 'making the difference'. Spare supposes the 'properties of simplicity' that Deleuze and Guattari call the 'molecularity' of becoming. Magic in this reading would therefore be a difference making activity within a world of becoming characterised by the flux of fundamental simplicity or molecularity at the heart of the universe.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian model of becoming gives us a structure through which we might see this process of 'plugging into' the orgiastic consciousness as the principle technique of the sorcerer. The multiplicity of multiplicities, all ever shifting, form the plane of activity but the border crossings are never, in principle, predictable even if some may be more familiar than others - the role of drugs for example provides an unpredictable if familiar route to crossing borders of consciousness. Drugs in fact provide a crucial example of the way in which the practical thought of Deleuze and Guattari could be used and is intended by them to be used. The famous maxim of Deleuze and Guattari, which they take from Henry Miller, is that we should attempt "to succeed in getting drunk, but on pure water". The success of such a process rests upon the structures of becoming that are similar to those underlying Spare's attempts at creating organic beliefs through sigilisation but both of these processes are techniques of experimentation.

Deleuze and Guattari's thought enable the sorceries of Spare to be retrieved from the linear arrangements made by someone like Kenneth Grant who wants to assimilate him to a particular magical current whilst allowing such suggestions to provoke an interesting series of connections. They also offer a model of matter that no longer needs concepts such as 'aether' to allow non-causal connections. It brings the role of the writer and the artist to the fore rather than the model of the mystic and prompts

experimentation and open structures rather than ideas of verification and inexpressible experientiality contained within assimilations of magic to science combined with the role of the secret. Magic is another form of knowledge, often relying upon the secret of the inexpressible experience, but such an approach is in danger of forgetting the other side of activity, that in which 'knowledge' is an embodied, active process of experimental learning. Any emphasis on an over simple concept of knowledge will fall prey to the permanent danger of a debilitating scepticism. I have only been able to give some very broad suggestions in this essay, but the purpose is to put forward a notion of another current within magical practice, one that runs alongside all human activity; the activity of the experimental and anomalous becoming which may be found at the heart of any notion of freedom. As such magic - like philosophy - has less importance for knowledge than for an ethical practice of relations with the living.

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The Living Word of Zos

by Robert Ansell

A Personal Recollection first published in AOS: A Celebration, 14th May, 2006

In life we sometimes encounter an individual who has a profound influence on the way we see the world, and more rarely, on the way the world sees us. Many years ago, I met such a man. Our first contact, through the pages of a book, made only a slight impression on me, but I was young and the distractions of that volume many. Six years later my love of books brought me to into the service of the auctioneers Sotheby's and here, one morning in 1986, the artist and publisher Austin Osman Spare and I were formally introduced.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris, 1912 - Image © Copyright Fulgur Limited

My professional mentor was Simon Heneage, a man of exceptional kindness and generosity. Simon was astute in recognising a rebel without a cause and, no doubt for this reason, he asked me to comment upon a small pen and ink drawing. It was a design for an Edwardian ex-libris, but somehow the artist had brought life into an impossible pairing; the head of a mallard bursting out from a strange floral composition. It was at once exquisite, unsettling and masterful. I studied it intently as Simon introduced me to the story of the artist – a boy genius, gifted, flawed, later a London recluse and mystery. It seemed an extraordinary life, mythic and full of pathos, but as I gazed into the intricate lines of the drawing I was overwhelmed by a sense of absolute familiarity. A few days later, and years before I understood what such an undertaking

involved, I announced to bemused colleagues that I was going to write a biography for the artist. In retrospect it was more of a commitment to the man than to his life, but my rôle had yet to be made clear for me, and the enthusiasm of youth is seldom concerned with detail.

During the early winter of 1986, my cursory research into the life of Austin Osman Spare revealed an artist dismissed by his contemporary critics. Common themes seemed to involve him “dabbling in the occult” and “turning his back on society.” These clichés seemed glib even to my inexperienced eye, yet if these obstacles stood in the way of a more intimate understanding, events were to change my perspective within weeks. In the November of 1986 I was asked at short notice to attend a house visit for an important client. It was my first such visit for Sotheby’s and I felt ill-prepared, but despite reservations I found myself dispatched to deepest Dorset in search of a house referred to simply as ‘The Eye.’ After stopping for directions in Corfe Castle, I arrived at the gate to a discrete drive flanked by a high hedge – there was no name – but on the gatepost my gaze was met by a cyclopic eye motif that glared hypnotically out at the world.

Kaikhosru Sorabji - © Sorabji Archive

The house was the home of the reclusive composer Kaikhosru Sorabji, then ninety-four years old. After my long journey Sorabji’s assistant, Alastair Hinton, welcomed me into a large drawing room full of strange and exotic antiques. The scene seemed to have lain unchanged for decades and to my naïveté it held an unfamiliar glamour. Uncertain and nervous, I raised my eyes and found, to my astonishment, a large pen and wash drawing by a very familiar artist. I recall identifying the picture and Alastair guiding me towards a signed vellum copy of *The Book of Pleasure* and a deluxe copy of *The Focus of Life*, before leaving me to continue with my professional assessment. Standing alone in that silent and dusky room, with a shaft of sunlight streaming onto Sorabji’s parlour grand and his shelves lined with exquisitely bound rarities, I looked up at the drawing and breathed the air of an era still vital, yet long passed. In these few moments AOS seemed to transcend glib cliché and become a living truth. Seldom does life offer such profound clarity.

In early 1987, armed and encouraged by Simon, and seemingly beckoned by my subject, I ventured tentatively out onto the path I now know so intimately. In search of my quarry I made enquiries to various booksellers and thankfully these produced a copy of Kenneth Grant’s *The Magical Revival*. Here I found an entirely different man from the failed artist of the fine arts academia, AOS had become ZOS: mythic, potent and sexed. It was to become the entrée to another Spare, warm and humorous, later enfleshed by the intimate record of *Zos Speaks!*, but at that time a man glimpsed through a glass darkly. Whilst I grappled with reconciling this 50s Brixton sorcerer to the Edwardian maverick artist, fate once again intervened to provide a crucial segment of the puzzle. A casual remark led one of my colleagues at Sotheby’s, Dendy Easton, to mention he had recently met an elderly man who claimed to have known Spare well. I was intrigued and in the January of 1987 found myself writing to an unexpected Frank Letchford.

L-R: Gavin Semple, Frank Letchford and Robert Ansell at the AOS exhibition to celebrate the launch of Fulgur, 1992

If Sorabji had represented Spare's elitist Edwardian heights, Frank represented the Elephant and Castle humanitarian. Warm, engaging and ever helpful, Frank opened many doors for me, brokering introductions to Dennis Bardens, Ian Kenyur-Hodgkins and eventually, to my great friend and co-conspirator, Gavin Semple. Working together Gavin and I found camaraderie and ultimately inspiration; for it was during this time our research unearthed an early notepaper design by Spare as a 'Publisher of Rare Editions.' In this moment was revealed the fulgurant path that now lies for so many years behind us, born of a seemingly unfulfilled dream.

These events are now memories, yet still the hand of Spare draws a line across the pages of my life – sometimes almost unperceivable, at others unmistakable, dancing, twisting, but always living, an influence that outlasts all others. His early experiments with automatism and the philosophy of the "Neither-Neither" were pioneering excursions into the nature of creative vision and these have been a source of inspiration to me, as they have to many others. That my early understandings of the man have now given way to a wiser insight has perhaps more to do with the lessons of my own life than of knowledge gained from books and meeting those who knew him well. For, when you strip away the myths and fallacies surrounding Spare's long creative path, what remains is the story of an incredibly driven man who, despite the endless hardships dealt to him by fate, refused to give up or compromise. Fifty years after his death it is this resolve, the Stoicism of Zos, that seems a much more authentic legacy than the cults of acquisitive formulae descended from popular myth. To suffer greatly and find therein a deeper understanding of the human condition is perhaps the most humbling of all ennoblements: Spare lived and limned that life, lest we forget. Austin Osman Spare, philosopher, mystic, artist and Stoic – your legacy lives on still.

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Late Nineteenth-Century Automatism and Proto-Cybernetic Communication: the case of Austin Osman Spare

by Chris Miles

Introduction

The figure I will be talking to you about today, Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), is uniquely suited to helping us investigate the shifting conceptions of automatism in the

long nineteenth-century.

An artist, writer and self-described sorcerer, Spare was initially a celebrated young addition to the London scene of the late 1890s and early 1900s, earning enthusiastic praise from George Bernard Shaw and John Singer Sargent, amongst others. However, the decidedly unusual style and subject matter of his art, as well as his prickly temperament, began to increasingly isolate him from the bohemian establishment and by the time of his death in 1956 Spare was largely forgotten and his work mostly unshown.

His reputation has been progressively growing since the early 1970s, however, as a result of a number of books written by Kenneth Grant, a friend of Spare's later, down-and-out years and, not coincidentally, a disciple of Aleister Crowley.

Grant's enthusiastic support of Spare's art and writing has resulted in his work having a strong influence on modern occultism and his paintings, sketches and ephemera have recently begun to command high prices at auction.

Central to Spare's oeuvre are the small number of books that he published during his own lifetime that outlined his own personal magical belief system. This system affords automatism a key position and consequently, Spare is one of the few accomplished artists in history to have written extensively on their own use of automatic processes. What I hope to do today is to outline the manner in which Spare's automatism curiously synthesises the tension between the nineteenth-century spiritualist tradition and the subsequent move towards the 'scientification' of the phenomena produced by that tradition, using as a unique catalyst his magical interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution.

The Spiritualist Tradition

Within the context of Spiritualism, taken as the rough cluster of beliefs and practices that evolved from the initial performances of Maggie and Kate Fox in 1848 and the years following, there are a number of processes often identified as automatisms – automatic writing (practiced by Kate Fox herself), use of the Ouija Board or Planchette, table-tilting, automatic speech and automatic drawing. However, as has been pointed out, for instance by Daniel Cottom, Spiritualism does not represent a very clearly organised or homogenous movement: there was, from its inception, no single guiding voice, the Fox sisters apparently uninterested in providing any form of theoretical or methodological framework for their workings. Consequently, the Spiritualist movement demonstrates a wonderfully wide body of variations across matters of belief, practice and nomenclature. However, much of the early rhetoric produced by supporters of the Fox sisters and the movement that followed in their wake shares the use of the telegraph as a root metaphor. Phrases such as the "spiritual telegraph", "telegraphic dispatches from spirits" and "celestial telegraph" were common ways of describing the table-rapping phenomenon.

Indeed, Andrew Jackson Davis, a monumental figure in the early history of American Spiritualism, framed the events in Hydesville (the Fox's hometown) as the final successful result of repeated attempts by Benjamin Franklin (that is, the spirit of Franklin) to establish an "electrical method of telegraphing from the second sphere to the earth's inhabitants" (Davis, 1851).

From this perspective, Spiritualism is fundamentally an automatism – the seer or medium (in whose presence the raps are manifested) is a telegraph station, a conduit for electrical messages that themselves echo the (by 1848) modish cadences of Samuel Morse's code.

Work by R. Laurence Moore and Werner Sollors, amongst others, has demonstrated the strong connections between the growth of the physical and spiritual telegraphs. For my purposes today, what is important about this relationship is the common communication scheme that makes the metaphor so appealing.

auto1a.jpg

As we can see here, the telegraph, with its encoded and decoded tappings serving clients on both ends of a transmission conduit is an obvious analogue for the Spiritualist enterprise and one that neatly transferred an acceptable marketing model to the practice. It is noteworthy, indeed, that the communicative role of the medium quickly evolved from a vaguely-defined facilitator or catalyst to that of a more clear and familiar operator. Initially, the Fox sisters' presence brought on the rapping of tables – they themselves were not involved in any communicative action (speech, writing, etc.): people asked simple questions and then heard rappings which were interpreted as responses. However, as the crowds grew, news traveled and the opportunities for public demonstrations increased – and so there came a need for a more sophisticated and efficient, and perhaps more clearly performative, communicative turn. The initial steps taken were introduced by an acquaintance of the Foxes, Isaac Post, and consisted of a coding of the alphabet to enable the rappings to more practicably spell out words and sentences (rather than signal simply 'yes', 'no' and the lower numbers). Increasing refinements to the speed of communication in the séance resulted in an increased use of the body of the medium – the hands and the voice in particular became subsumed into the communicative network, or rather the lines of communication became internalized into the body of the medium. The planchette and prototypes of the Ouija Board enabled a far quicker processing of the alphabet but necessitated the highly significant surrender of the body to the spiritual telegraphic mechanism. This surrender was accomplished with little questioning or opposition in part due to the distinct lack of ideological framework around the Fox sisters' early performances and also in part due to the established (if distinctly marginal) traditions of Swendonborgian seership and Mesmerism. Responding to what well might have been external suggestion, the Fox sisters and those who rapidly followed in their wake, began to surrender their bodily autonomy in order to become living Morse keys.

The production of automatic text thus became a commonplace practice amongst the

many varieties of Spiritualist gatherings. For Frederic Myers, a one-time President of the Society for Psychical Research, writing at the end of the 19th century in his canonical, two-volume work entitled *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, automatism, which he divides into sensory and motor varieties, provided the strongest evidence for “something transcending sensory experience in the reserves of human faculty” (Vol. 1, p.222).

Myers’ definition of motor automatism will now serve us as a convenient jumping-off point for an examination of Austin Osman Spare’s own understanding and practice. Psychologists and physiologists had, by the time of Myers’ writing, attempted to include automatism within their own disciplinary bodies. The physiologist William Carpenter’s 1874 coining of the term “ideomotor” to cover any human behaviour that does not depend upon volition was perhaps the initial step to begin to include the variegated phenomena of the automatisms as well as facets of mesmerism and hypnosis within the medico-scientific paradigm. Late nineteenth-century psychology, and in particular the school of dynamic psychiatry which was to influence the later Surrealists so deeply, began to try and offer non-Spiritualist explanations for the quite obvious and repeatable phenomena that automatism produced: Pierre Janet’s important *L’Automatisme psychologique*, published in 1889, was an attempt to analyse the practices of mediums in order to both explain them using Janet’s model of the mind and then use them for therapeutic purposes.

The scientific investigation of automatism included, on its periphery, the work of those ‘believers’ in the reality of spiritual communication who wished to bring empirical rigour to the examination of psychic or spiritual practices.

Foremost amongst such figures, of course, were the members of the Society for Psychical Research. The writings of Frederick Myers, an SPR member and President, provide us with a clear example of the attempted intellectual fusion of the medical with the spiritual in an attempt to position automatism within a scientific paradigm. The following quote serves to illustrate Myers’ rhetorical hybridisation of medical language:

In the first place, then, our automatisms are independent phenomena; they are what the physician calls *idiognomonic*. That is to say, they are not merely symptomatic of some other affection, or incidental to some profounder change. The mere fact, for instance, that a man writes messages which he does not consciously originate will not, when taken alone, prove anything beyond this fact itself as to the writer’s condition. He may be perfectly sane, in normal health, and with nothing unusual observable about him. This characteristic –provable by actual observation and experiment –distinguishes our automatisms from various seemingly kindred phenomena.

(Myers, Vol 2. p. 87)

Myers theorized that all of the automatisms were what he called “nunciative”, or message-bearing, but that in most cases those messages originated from “within the automatist’s own mind” (p. 88). This position enabled him to align himself, at least

superficially, with the less-marginalised, more scientifically-established, work of contemporary psychiatric theorists and physiologists. However, for Myers, what this really meant was that there was a part of the mind that was innately sensitive to the spiritual or transcendent world and it was that part, the subliminal, as he referred to it, which was taking control over motor movements in a way that Myers (perhaps inadvertently displaying his Spiritualist sympathies) likened to a telegraph operator. For Myers, then, automatisms were a means for the subliminal self to communicate with the supraliminal self and so make the latter aware of a large ocean of information and impressions that it would normally be deaf and blind to.

Spare's Automatism

Austin Osman Spare's theory of automatism can be seen as a parallel, if far more extreme, version of Myer's attempt to frame automatism within the language of contemporary research upon the mind, drawing it away from its rather anti-intellectual roots in Spiritualism and the séance and attempting to couch it in more rational, scientific, if still quite spiritual, rhetoric.

Although Spare had little interest in the Spiritualist and séance scene he was deeply involved in the occult revival of the late 19th century: he was a member of Aleister Crowley's Argenteum Astrum Lodge, familiar with the writings of Eliphas Levi and S. L. MacGregor-Mathers (one of the founders of The Order of The Golden Dawn) and also deeply influenced by H. P. Blavatsky's Theosophy movement.

He was, however, first and foremost, an artist and automatic drawing for him was an important, practical element in his method as an artist.

In 1913, Spare published his third book, entitled *The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love): The Psychology of Ecstasy*. This extraordinary work is a collection of short chapters, heavily illustrated with automatic drawings of varying complexity and finish, that impart to the reader the details of Spare's creed – his personal mythology, his sorcery, his magic.

One of the chapters is entirely concerned with an explication of the practice of automatic drawing and this, along with a more extensive article co-authored with his friend and fellow-artist, Frederick Carter, and published in 'Form' magazine in 1916, provides us with a detailed view of Spare's theory of automatism.

Before moving on to an examination of these texts, a quick browsing of the illustrations to *The Book of Pleasure* will alert us to a few obvious features. Drawings which appear to be automatic in nature (they are composed of continuous, meandering lines often appearing to develop the figurative from otherwise abstract forms) are usually framed by a mixture of cryptic text, what look like letters form an unknown alphabet and stylised miniature diagrams. Furthermore, there are some illustrations which have perhaps some automatic component but in other respects are far more 'worked out'.

We can, then, through a superficial examination of these drawings, get the general

impression that for Spare automatism is an integrated part of artistic composition and design.

Turning now to Spare's own explication of automatic drawing – Spare tells us that “automatic drawing is a vital means of expressing what is at the back of your mind (the dream-man) and is a quick and easy means to begin being courageously original – eventually it evolves itself into the coveted spontaneous expression and the safe omniscience is assured” (TBOP, p.55)

Automatic drawing, then, is used by Spare to initially provide access to the “back of the mind” which can, through an evolution of practice, lead to “spontaneous expression”. Spare's definition of Art is drawn in similar lines, it being for him “the instinctive application (to observations or sensations) of the knowledge latent in the subconsciousness” (p.55).

Although it might appear that for Spare, the “dream-man” is being passively channelled in the practice of automatic drawing, there is in fact a significant degree of interaction between the ‘consciousness’ and the “subconsciousness”. Initially, for example, the artist must practice the easy, flowing production of “simple forms”. Spare describes this as the hand being “trained from the accustomed practice to work freely and of itself” (p.55). The aim being to “allow the hand to draw itself...with the least deliberation possible” (p.56).

Of course, a traditional Spiritualist approach to the automatic banishes any possibility of conscious deliberation. The medium surrenders themselves to an entirely external message stream and training would be fundamentally anathema. Indeed, the use of the word ‘sensitive’ to describe many practicing (and professional) mediums indicates a natural ability to serve as a conduit for the spirit realm, rather than an achieved mastery of technique.

Furthermore, Spare's conception of the automatic process is strongly goal-orientated. So, once one has achieved the freedom to let one's hand draw on its own then one has to consider what one wishes the hand to draw.

Spare directs his automatism through the use of what he calls his “sigil method”. Briefly, one condenses the written goal into a compact monogram which bears no visual relation to the sense of the desire. This ‘sigil’ is then concentrated upon in order to aid in the production of an oblivious or vacuous state in the conscious mind. Then the hand having been trained to draw on its own even when the conscious mind is not directing it, the automatic drawing is produced corresponding to the original desired goal.

Spare's method is a form of two-way communication, then. The sigil contains a goal stated by the conscious mind which is then encoded and presented to the unconsciousness, the “dream-man”. The hand, trained (in an analogue to the highly trained hand of the Morse operator) to respond to the promptings of the unconscious thus expresses the visualised ‘answer’ to the conscious mind.

From the essay with Frederick Carter we may obtain an even clearer sense of the goal-directed nature of Spare's method:

"An 'automatic' scribble of twisting and interlacing lines permits the germ of ideas in the subconscious mind to express, or at least suggest itself to the consciousness. From the mass of procreative shapes, full of fallacy, a feeble embryo of ideas may be selected and trained by the artist to full growth and power. By these means may the profoundest depths of memory be drawn upon and the springs of instinct tapped"

(Form, p. 2)

Although this essay is presented within the context of an art journal rather than being extracted from Spare's highly personal presentation of sorcery, the comparatively more svelte discourse highlights the strong sense of what I will call proto-cybernetics that informs his methodology. By proto-cybernetics what I mean is that the process Spare describes is one that can be formulated in terms of a goal-directed communication and control system that uses knowledge of results to self-correct. Although such terms belong to the early days of cybernetics, particularly the work discussed in the Macy Foundation Conferences during the 1940s and 50s, it is worthwhile noting that some of the core ideas that fed into the study of self-correcting systems were already present at the beginning of the twentieth-century in the form of theories of learning and behaviour based upon what was called "knowledge of results". The work of the American psychologist Edward Thorndike would provide a prime example.

Let me re-frame the Sparean conception of automatism within these terms:

- Automatism is a technique that focuses on goal attainment. The artist must first establish a system which works fluidly and dynamically to respond to a particular level of control.
- The "dream-man" and conscious mind are mediated by the hand – and the eye.
- The conscious mind forms a goal and proceeds to visualise this goal in a manner that it itself cannot interpret, but the "dream-man" can.
- The "dream-man", responding to the expression of the goal, proceeds to express it own attempts to attain this goal through the hand (which has now been uncoupled from conscious control).
- The eye observes the hand's expression and then carries this information to the conscious mind. Spare's language regarding the subsequent stage is important to remember now – the artist "selects" and "trains" the images – the unconscious is "tapped": not allowed full dominance but rather actively nurtured. The artist, therefore, is responsible for using, adapting, "training" the flow of images from the "dream-man"-controlled hand.

Clearly, a delicate system is being articulated here, wherein the conscious artist, at certain points, steers the hand which otherwise is controlled by the unconsciousness. Indeed, what Spare would appear to be describing is a negative feedback loop designed to control for a particular goal and which needs to communicate at two different levels, the conscious and the unconscious.

auto2.jpg

When one considers the exact flow of communication and control in the system that Spare describes a number of features become evident. Although the unconsciousness is the initial source for the drawing, there is conscious judgement at play – at some point, when the artist's eye notices an artistic opportunity, the hand is once more taken under conscious control. There is, it would therefore seem, an actually quite limited role for the unconsciousness – it provides the germ of an idea, the concentrated essence of something that the artist may immediately develop into something more designed or composed.

However, for Spare, the unconsciousness is not just producing random output for the conscious mind to elaborate upon, but rather unfettered, unmodified apprehension of what he called the “storehouse of memories” (p.47). Spare describes this in the following way:

“Know the sub-consciousness to be an epitome of all experience and wisdom, past incarnations as men, animals, birds, vegetable life, etc., etc. everything that exists, has and ever will exist. Each being a stratum in the order of evolution. Naturally, then, the lower we probe into these strata, the earlier will be the forms of life we arrive at; the last is the Almighty Simplicity.

(TBOP, p.47)

The admixture of terminology here from Blavatskian Theosophy and Darwinian evolutionary theory reflects the highly syncretic nature of Spare's conception of the “storehouse of memory”. Centrally, the information and experience he alludes to are entirely internal to the artist yet they are, Spare contends, real “existences” contained within us. Spare uses, indeed, the word “Karmas” to describe particularly the earlier existences that an artist might wish to experience, such as the incarnation of a bird or bat. And yet, at the same time as he uses a term from such an obviously Orientalist-mystical background he is also invoking the empirical scientific aura associated with Darwin's legacy. So, we read:

“The law of Evolution is retrogression of function governing progression of attainment, i.e. the most wonderful our attainments, the lower in the scale of life the function that governs them. Our knowledge of flight is determined by that desire causing the activity of our bird Karmas” (p. 47)

So, in conclusion, if automatism were seen by Spiritualists as message streams from the dead, and if psychiatry subsumed those messages into the individual, then Spare fuses the two perspectives with a pseudo-Darwinian theory of evolutionary history being

contained within the individual unconsciousness. In this sense, the 'dead' that Spare is in contact with are dead evolutionary links, 'atavisms' from our pre-history that express themselves through the artist's surrendered hand – in a cybernetically-controlled evolutionary telegraph.

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Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Eastern Mediterranean University,
Gazi Mağusa,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Note: This paper was delivered as part of the 'Automatic Creativity' panel at the 'Minds Bodies Machines' conference held at Birkbeck College, London, on 6th and 7th of July, 2007. I have dispensed with footnoting the paper and instead have provided a bibliography of works cited at the end of the piece.

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Austin O. Spare
by R.E.D. Sketchley

First published in The Art Journal, 1908

There must be few people in London interested in art who do not know the name of Austin Osman Spare. The recent exhibition of his drawings made a sudden reputation for him, and the few who before the bringing together of his work had knowledge of his extraordinary talent are part now of a considerable public. This, at all events, is certain: nobody who saw the drawings at the Bruton Gallery can have been indifferent to them. They may have stirred repulsion, or an ugly form of curiosity, only here and there rebuked by some pure beauty in the work, but no one can have seen them dully and forgotten what they are like. The drawing on the catalogue-cover had power enough to turn people away from the exhibition, or allure them to it, not only because power is interesting, but because of the kind of jeering, loose-lipped image of life suggested. It is a hateful image of evil sight, the coarse-fleshed face of the eighteenth century Satan-type, but expressive of no idea of energy even in destruction or accusation.

Inferno by Austin Spare p.9, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

In the power shown in producing convincing form the drawing on the catalogue is a real introduction to the art of Austin Spare, and it is partly true, too, in its suggestion of a rout of foul shapes thronging into sight. But it is not completely true as an indication of the actual contents of this copious and forcible art, and I believe it to be no true introduction to what Spare has the power to create, if his art from being the almost involuntary utterance of all that seethes in his mind becomes a reasoned expression of the essential.

At present, it seems to me, the form of Mr Spare's art is a process, not a conclusion. He is still very young, and much of the work shown at the Bruton Galleries was done some years ago; at any time since he was fourteen. It is an extraordinary out-put for a boy, especially when one considers that what was shown is only a small part of what he has done. But this copious discharge of imagery is, I think, rather the preparation for creative art than the declaration of it. The passing from the stage when an idea possesses the mind to the stage when the mind possesses the idea, is held, in a true sequence of the seven ages, to mark the passing of youth to manhood. Though on the technical side Austin Spare has developed through discipline a considerable strength of

self-criticism, he has been occupied with reproducing the forms of his imagination almost without question or reason. The present result of this unquestioning reproduction of the forms that rise before his inward eye is to fill his art with monstrous and morbid shapes. Yet it is not really paradoxical to assert the very violence and distortion in proof of the essential healthiness and naturalness of his imaginative faculties. It is not paradoxical. But needs explanation, since the reconciliation of the fantastical with the normal is in the personality of the artist, and that needs to be realised before his art can be appraised.

River Styx by Austin Spare, c.1906. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

There is so much intelligence, and so little imagination, in modern art that the interpretation put on fantasies such as those of Mr. Spare is that they are the result of deliberate invention or imitation. There is an undoubted strain of likeness in much of his black-and-white work to that of Beardsley, and a similarity of mood in dealing with certain aspects of life. These qualities make it certain to the casual observer that the source of formal inspiration is the art of Beardsley, and that, having seen distorted ideas of good and evil enformed with beauty in the designs of the illustrator of 'Salome', Mr. Spare proceeded to an artificial intensification of 'fact', which should be more stimulating than the reality. More learned critics have assigned a great deal else in Austin Spare's work to the influence of other potent fantasists – to Goya, to Rops, to Hokusai, and to Greiner of Munich. As a matter of fact, Mr. Spare only made acquaintance with the art of Beardsley after he had done some of his most Beardsley-like designs, and with other of these "influences" he has not yet come into contact. When he does, if his work shows the effect, it will be – as the case of 'The Magician' and other designs that reflect the qualities of Japanese colour-prints – because he finds his own language used by a master who can teach him farther secrets of rhythm and contrast and phraseology.

The source of his art is himself, the deepest, not yet fully known or controlled self, from which, by thought, proceeds creative power of every kind. In his case the sense of inward sight is extraordinarily vivid. The drawing of himself removing the curtain from the mirror, and calling attention to what is seen therein, is as near possible to a precise image of his feeling about his work. Technically, of course, he identifies himself with it. If it is good, he feels striven to make it so; if it is bad, he must seek to remedy the failure. If with all effort it fails to be expressive of the effortless vision, he is the critic that destroys. But on "good" or "bad" qualities in his design other than aesthetic he has no self-criticism to bestow, though he is as ready as though another hand had drawn them, to dislike certain more violent and repulsive of them.

Austin Spare's attitude is the normal and healthy attitude of the artist, but we are, most of us, so beset with self-consciousness that it is improbable we will ever be generally dissociated from what is morbid or extravagant in his art, or not be held to show immoral tendencies if his art expresses no moral judgements. But I think that he himself, in steadier and more complete realisations of true vision, will dissociate himself from characterisation of the foul and horrible.

The unimaginative reason which assigns the appearances of things to categories of good and evil is a law of prudence, not of creation, and therefore inoperative in art. Mr. Spare was wise about that at sixteen years old. In the *Earth Inferno* he wrote of "The Chaos of the Normal", and that chaos is the apparent divided into opposites by the unimaginative reason. But, in the same remarkable book, he wrote "revere the Kia", and the "kia" in the nomenclature that he, like Blake, has invented for his needs of expression, is the indivisible point, the spiritual reason in man, and, in greater creation, the boundless power of which it is the reflection. That single and pure reason, the harmony that is born of peace and strife and the union of all other opposites, is not the inspiration of art that elaborates the horrible and morbid. When – it may be now – Mr. Spare has realised his power to control and purify his imagination, it must be that the forms of his art will image no more a "Chaos of the abnormal", but a Cosmos, an ordering of beauty in the image of perfect beauty.

That is no mere hope generated by the desire that so strong and penetrative an imagination and a technique already remarkable in expressive draughtsmanship and imaginative colour, should fulfil a fine achievement. The art of Mr. Spare, as it now is, is not the true reflection of what is essential in his vision of life. The output of a phase of morbid imagination in an artist of twenty is not to be taken as significant of what he will do later, even if it agrees with the whole personality. But already Austin Spare is reaching towards greater simplicity of idea, and, at the same time, towards a fuller technical accomplishment, more assured draughtsmanship and composition, the use of colour in oil and tempera as well as water-colour. The imaginative and aesthetic issue must be a matter of deep interest to all who know his work and realise the sources of it.

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Austin Osman Spare: A Note on His Work

by Ralph Straus

First published in The Booklover's Magazine, 1909

AOS at home, 15 Kennington Park Gardens, 1904. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

One must never forget that in the best days of art there were no art critics, and I sometimes wonder whether a time will come when art-criticism will be included amongst the grosser crimes. It is so easy, and so monotonous, to speak dreary platitudes about the inexplicability of beauty with the firm intention of following them by a fairly minute exposition of its qualities.

It is so easy to be fulsomely adulatory or impertinent, or merely contemptuous, and no one has yet convinced me that interpretation is a necessary complement to an art. One

may talk of the conquest of intelligence over imagination in modern work; one may speak of this school or that, and one may express a good-humoured, if slightly superior, astonishment at a particular work of art which does not seem to have been built up on what are known, rather curiously, as regular lines; but I honestly doubt whether the juxtaposition of modern artist and modern critic is adding very much to the art save from the standpoint of history. I may admire the composition and disparage the technique, or I may enjoy the colouring and fall foul of the subject; as critic, in fact, I have enormous powers – but the powers are probably uniquely immoral. ‘A critic,’ wrote Hazlitt, ‘does nothing nowadays who does not try to torture the most obvious expression into a thousand meanings, and enter into a circuitous explanation of all that can be urged for or against its being in the best or worst style possible’ – which is the last goal at which I should wish to aim. ‘To elevate and surprise,’ continues the same author, ‘is the great rule for producing a dramatic or critical effect.’ Here again it is necessary to say that I have no thoughts of causing either surprise or elevation. Probably, however, I am not a ‘critic’ at all.’

At the beginning of this year there was an exhibition of drawings in the Bruton Gallery by a hitherto unknown artist, and the critics thereupon made many curious and contradictory discoveries. That the artist had ‘undeniable power’ was very generally allowed. That he had accumulated horrors was as certain as that his ambition was of the ‘wrong’ kind. To one writer this work suggested a ‘jeering, loose-limbed image of life,’ whilst another informed the world that the exhibitor had learned more than a little from Japan. The artist, according to the last-mentioned, ‘might become an impressive and penetrating realist, but we are not yet convinced that he has the gift of imagination even in those regions-neither of earth or hell, and certainly not of heaven – in which he loves to dwell – we might have said to wallow.’ To others his work was a weird imitation of Beardsley and Goya and Rops and Hokusai and Greiner of Munich. To one he was brutal beyond measure, or even decency; to another he was merely fantastic and immature. To one he was in deadly earnest, to another he was a rather morbid poseur. ‘His gaze,’ wrote a critic in *The Daily Telegraph*, ‘has assuredly not been upwards; we hope that his fall may not be fatal. Falling let him embrace his mother Earth, and from her derive true strength and a measure of sanity.’ The exhibition was described as a ‘strange, uncomfortable show.’

Bruton Gallery Catalogue, 1907. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

I did not see that ‘strange, uncomfortable show,’ but it led incidentally to the penning of a sentence which I wish to quote. ‘Nobody,’ wrote Miss Sketchley in the *Art Journal* ‘who saw the drawings in the Bruton Gallery can have been indifferent to them.’ In view of what I have seen I can well believe those words. Whatever opinion might have been entertained of their merits or demerits, the drawings of this unknown artist could not be ignored. Who, then, was this man who, with a small collection of curiously baffling pictures, had suddenly sprung himself upon the mercies of artistic, or inartistic, London? He turned out to be a boy of nineteen, the son of a retired member of the Police Force, and certain of the newspapers claimed to have already discovered him. In point of fact, he had been interviewed some time before in *The Daily Chronicle*, and his name was

Austin Osman Spare. He was the boy-artist who had exhibited at the Royal Academy two years before, the South Kensington art-scholar and silver medallist – recommended to the school there by Sir William Richmond and Mr. Jackson, R.A. – a former designer of posters for Causton's at the lordly salary of five shillings a week, and the juvenile author of one, and the illustrator of two, books which had attracted the attention of more than a single connoisseur. I saw those two books, confessed to a bewilderment, recalled incidentally certain works of such widely different artists as Michael Angelo and William Blake, and set out to meet the artist. And when he came to my house I was irresistibly reminded of the Angel in Mr. Wells's Wonderful Visit. It needed no more than five minutes' conversation to make me understand that he possessed what, for want of a better description, I must call the 'odd' point of view; he looked on life, and on the components of life, not as men usually look on them, but from a standpoint peculiarly his own. He was obviously one of those rare creatures possessed, like Socrates, of a daemon. Now a man with a daemon is a phenomenon very much to my liking, particularly when he happens to be an artist, because in that case he will draw not so much what he sees as what he thinks; and my visitor with the wonderful hair and the face of a Watts' Knight – he has caricatured it hundreds of times in his work, sometimes, I suspect, for want of a model – had elected to entertain thoughts of the weirdest nature. I was not surprised to learn that he had long been enthusiastic over the mysteries of the East – Buddhism and its legends, Theosophy and its Mahatmas, Magic and its bevy of Enchanters, such as have fascinated the children of all generations and will fascinate them to the end of all time. He had, indeed, explored the strait passages which lead away from the Things of Men towards the Far Unknown. He had read and dreamed of the occult and the diabolic, and, looking into his deep eyes, I wondered whether I would cast out my commonplace philosophy and begin to believe in reincarnation. We talked, I remember, of tortures and fairies, of tapestries and blood and were-wolfs, of magic and book-plates and religion, and after that I followed him round London for a sight of such works as he had sold.

The result of that journey was to assure me that the work was no less interesting than the boy. Both, to my mind, were startlingly new, and the suggestion of immaturity was by no means pronounced. I saw exactly what I had expected to see – a medley of Gargantuan figures in marvellously intricate compositions, wolf-men and devils, monstrous bird-men and soul-haunting trolls, fairies and magic and mist. There were headless bodies and bodiless heads, and over all the suggestion of such power as is rare in this age of correct and conventional work. For we are correct and conventional, even the most original of us, and a generation or two will have to pass before we have freed ourselves from the chain of superstition which is bound close about us from infancy. The work of this boy, however, seemed at first to be breaking most of the recognised canons, wherefore I rejoiced.

My personal inclination for the grotesque received full measure of satisfaction, yet I did not somehow gather that these black and white drawings and water-colour sketches altogether suggested the grotesque. I saw 'deerskin-vested satyrs, crowned with ivy-twist, advance, and put strange pity in their horned countenance' – but a satyr need not be merely grotesque. The work, however, explained the artist, which was exactly its

purpose, and as I did not pretend to understand the artist, I was not in the least disappointed to find that I understood little of his work. Some of it provided me with a series of horrible reflections which were only dispelled at sight of a caricature of Mr Crooks, M.P. – a delightful sketch well worthy of publication – in Mr Pickford Waller's collection, yet I was never reminded of Weirtz. Some of it was uncouth, some almost gross, but I was never repulsed; I only enjoyed – and wondered.

Earth Inferno by Austin Spare, p.29, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Miss Sketchley in her article had truly said that the form of Austin Spare's art is a process, not a conclusion, and that he has been occupied in reproducing the figures of his imagination 'almost without question or reason' seems patent. By consequence, his drawings for the most part are filled with the 'monstrous and morbid shapes' to which the critic I have quoted draws attention. On the other hand, I do not know that I am prepared to admit with Miss Sketchley the 'essential healthiness' of the boy's imaginative faculties. I do not say that they are unhealthy – I merely cavil at the critic's choice of word. Here, indeed, one touches upon a question which has worried the critic for a century or more, and worried him, so far as I can see, to no purpose whatsoever. At all times health is difficult of explanation, but surely the healthy in art is altogether beyond definition. I dislike definitions at all times, perhaps because I am grossly unmathematical; but when it comes to the question of health – or the other thing – in art, I am cold to the most impassioned reply. I am certain that the work is himself, which is all I demand of him, and if, as I think, it occasionally suggests a superabundance of cruelty, I, who hate cruelty, may be wroth, not with the work or the worker, but only with the Providence which has elected to produce minds of a torturing disposition. Austin Spare's work is natural because it is himself, but why it should be dubbed either healthy or the reverse, I do not know. Personally – were I wishful to speak vaguely – I should call it 'unhealthy' merely because it produces no purely normal reflections, but in that case I should have to define normal, and that in its turn would lead to a wordy paragraph which might satisfy a good many unscientific people, but would probably mean very little indeed. Art and health, however, are not, or should not be, in the least inter-dependent. Wherefore it will be superfluous to say more than that this strange boy's work must be taken to be the expression of an unusual personality gifted with a talent not yet wholly in proportion to its inventive powers – one can hardly wonder at this in view of the fact that he has had no more than a rudimentary and occasional training – but striving for no more than a faithful representation of its innermost self.

Here, perhaps, whilst on the question of health, it maybe permissible to quote from Austin Spare's own published words:

'Alas!' he writes, 'I am morbid,
And have put a purple colour about my brow.
All men seem eating and drinking the
"Joy of the Round Feast," while I am
Melancholy and silent, as though in a
Gloomy wood, astray.

Strange images of myself did I create,
As I gazed into the seeming pit of others,
Losing myself in the thoughtfulness
Of my unreal self, as humanity saw me.
But alas ! on entering to the consciousness
Of my real being to find fostering
-The all-prevailing woman,"
And I strayed with her, into the path direct.
"Hail! the Jewel in the Lotus,"

They are pregnant words for a boy of seventeen.

The two books please me least of all his work, but they might have been far better reproduced. Speaking of the first, *Earth Inferno*, Mr. James Guthrie calls it 'an elemental and chaotic thing, full of significant art, and of still more significant conception.' These words bear out my own opinion. He has suffered, and he has seen, and his sufferings have strangely, matured his mind. He is seer as well as artist, just as the great poets are also the great prophets.

There is an interesting preface, written by Mr. Guthrie, to the second of Austin Spare's publications, *A Book of Satyrs*. 'With the unflinching assurance of the optimist as to the ultimate,' he writes, '[Spare] treads with reforming energy where the effeminate and parsonic would whimper and weep helplessly. His is no gently advancing theory, but his satires (or satyrs, as he loves to call them) arrive as full-fledged and assertive dogma.' Indeed he sees the sores and the humbugs and the pettinesses of life with a looming, fearless eye, and this perhaps is what Miss Sketchley had in mind when she wrote that the boy's art was healthy. In this book he has attempted in some measure to do with his pencil that which Zola did with his pen, with the difference that for the Frenchman's reality he has substituted a mystical realism – to use a rather awkward oxymoron – and he has crowded into some dozen cartoons the basis of a surprisingly mature philosophy. I do not know that I have ever seen so fierce an exposition of the sores of life crowded into so small a space. There is mysticism, but there is also stark truth. No one could possibly look upon the drawings without a shock or a shudder. 'In his art,' continues Mr. Guthrie, 'Spare continually achieves the unexpected; his pattern is always original, his characteristic line is of fine nervous quality, his types are powerfully visualised. The very subtle irony of his temper is apparent in a hundred whimsical ways – in attitudes, gestures, expressions too delicate to be more than contributory to the whole impression. This appropriate irony especially fits Spare for satire, and it is here [in *The Book of Satyrs*] to be seen and felt, for it can neither be disregarded nor forgotten – which words it is well to be able to write of one satirist in our day of curbed enthusiasm and polite art.' For my own part, I could at once recognise a drawing of Spare's and that in its way is a test of personality.

I have seen many hundreds of studies which this boy has made, and I can say with truth that I have never seen such magnificent composition. Even his earliest work shows the same brilliant invention although the actual workmanship is often weak. My dear friend

Desmond Coke possesses a water-colour study entitled 'The Sacrifice', painted at the age of fifteen – it called forth no small eulogy from Watts himself – which to my mind is almost a marvel of artistic arrangement. The draughtsmanship is poor and halting, but there is in it the groundwork for a great picture, and great pictures are surprisingly few in number.

His best work is undoubtedly that in the Chinese black and white which were Beardsley's most successful media, yet in the few watercolours which I saw in Mr Pickford Waller's collection there is a wealth of colour, as might frighten the more timid and amaze the student, but which, like the drawings, cannot be ignored. In particular there are three unnamed pictures presumably relating to Eastern Magic which, in point alike of composition and colour, compare favourably with the far more highly finished work of some of the recognised masters. There is indeed a suggestion of that feast of colour which Brangwyn – himself, by the way, to be numbered amongst Spare's admirers – almost alone amongst our native painters can so successfully provide. Nor indeed has there been the smallest sign of a waning imagination. I do not think that in the years to come Austin Spare will be numbered amongst those who have degenerated into the correct painters beloved by the average philistine, nor do I suppose that he will ever feel inclined to paint that which the many might call beautiful. He will never become popular, unless circumstances impel him to undertake hackwork wherein his soul does not make its impression, but if his progress be unretarded, he will have to be numbered amongst the elect. It were useless to say that he still has much to learn, and it were as useless to point out that his knowledge of anatomy, while much more than rudimentary, might scandalise the professors of that science, and I should be harking back to my trade of fiction were I to suggest that he had yet to become immured to that modicum of discipline which is necessary in every branch of art. There is indeed the germ of a discipline already apparent in his more finished work.

At the moment he is illustrating a book of poems by C.F. Grindrod and a work of his own, steadfastly experimenting in tempora, and he is ambitious to paint a few portraits which shall be "symbols of the persons," in which connection I may mention that he has done a caricature of myself, which, whilst a "speaking" likeness, is undoubtedly the ugliest thing on God's earth.

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Symbology in Aesthetics in Relation to the Art of Austin O. Spare
by Grace Rogers

First Published in Artwork, 1925

Among the many complexities that have transpired in the evolution of the present social

order is the changing nature of artistic criteria and the more limited sphere of aesthetic service.

At one time art was the direct outcome of the needs of man for inter-relationship with forces governing his conditions, and indicative of strongly felt social emotions directed to functional service found the special channels for expression which handed down the ages the traditional form of dance, ritual, drama, architecture – the national heritage of mankind. But the relative values in life are changed. We are less simple and direct: language has become “a dictionary of faded metaphors,” art a process of ornament added to decay; symbols have lost their original significance and the fundamental basis of traditional is obscured. Thus is it commonly realised emotions have given place to arbitrary inhibitions and “modern complexes” and art became a specialised function forced to serve an individual aim, which frequently limited the artist to a “coterie” of appreciators. In these days it is said “art is the transmission to others of a special feeling experienced by the artist,” and though analysis might prove this to be equally true of any other period since art became individual in any sense of the word, yet it specially emphasises the need for change in the nature of our approach and acceptance. We, as spectators, are bound to participate in the individual vision and in the realisation of the aesthetic values which serve to convey the artist’s intention rather than the expression of ideas as apprehended by the mass in general.

Ambiguity must occur, however, in an age of transition and unfixed belief. In the search for new aesthetic foundations principles are employed as ends rather than less obviously as means and much of the ultimate intention is frustrated or incomplete.

The language of the emotions expressed in arbitrary and unintelligible symbolism bewilders public and critic alike who are at a loss for some “aesthetic plumb-line” and the distance between the artist and the public perceptibly widens, for every picture cannot tell its story in terms of ideas associated with objects, although the general determination is it should. Moreover it is increasingly difficult to distinguish between the absurdity veiling incapacity and the honest experiment. We are fearful of “fancy tricks” and “pose,” blissfully unconscious we accept them every day in more discreet disguise.

Yet the truth is “one of the returns that haunt our civilisation and our art.” And in this return to Nature, even though it may take the form of more grotesque complexity, we again realise in art that condition allied to music itself, as rather an apprehension of conscious than rational representations, and it moves us similarly as the proportions and spaces of architecture (which Schopenhauer has aptly termed Frozen music), its harmonies manifest almost by some mathematical co-relation.

And as in the development of musical orchestration, a new factor was introduced through the divorce of the sounds from the words which had given a certain significance and shape which led through the construction of musical composition upon tonality and rhythmic balance in statement, to the re-discovery of the principles which had been in existence from the beginning (which had their root and origin in the bodily movement of dance, the unqualified speech of the emotions that original “gesture” of mankind

towards the forces conditioning his existence), thus in the same way it has come to be said of modern drawing, that its essence is a “dancing on paper” which exemplifies the artist’s ability to co-ordinate his ideas and emotional reactions, and like the Chinese draughtsmen of old – those past-masters in the art of linear expressiveness, “the strokes of his brush announce him in the nobility of his soul, or in its meanness and limitation.”

Personality then is the factor that counts; thus the secret of art lies with the artist himself and with Buffon we might say “le style, c’est l’homme.”

Grace Rogers by Austin O. Spare, 1927. Image copyright © Fulgur Limited

A cursory analysis of the elements of draughtsmanship could dismiss them briefly, linear and functional, the first concerning itself with the “calligraphic” property by which the artist expresses his dexterity and skill, while in the second the functional, the value lies in the expressiveness of the contour to clothe the inner form and which exists as the bounding of masses serving in the co-operation and co-ordination with other lines in the sense of part of living organic unity. But the term “line for line’s sake” which we might apply to the calligraphic “gesture” will have the virtue of line for form’s sake even though it may not fulfil the functional purpose of conveying the simplest and most effective resolution of a complex problem. We are told the Japanese “norm” of beauty lay in the curve of the letter S, which analysis might prove an abstract disposition of geometrical relations, the intellectual and emotional content of which lies buried as in a glyph and pertains to abstract qualities which reason ultimately cuts out of the universe, again among abstruse problems of personality and psycho-analysis we are informed by a certain professor on art that in the observation of a beautiful curve “it is also possible that there will be an effect on glandular secretions, which will in turn intensify the striped muscles” which, however, we incline to dismiss as reduction ad absurdum, or merely the crude recognition of physical re-action implying obscure psychical and symbolic significance. None the less, to return to drawing itself, do we find the preoccupation with the possibilities of line implied in the functional purpose, which in the extract of the structural essentials as directed by the genius or idiosyncrasy of the artist and the realisation of a unified whole created by the co-relationship of parts, in virtue of rhythmic movement or gesture becomes significant form.

And we are here confronted with the problem of what is “significant” form (another mis-used term), also with what have hitherto been termed peculiar divergences of the art known as E. and W. – (distinctions now being rapidly swept aside) but which for argument’s sake consist in the latter case, the preoccupation with problems of rendering the human form in three dimensions and the study of sequences of lines and masses necessary to hold groups or objects in recessive design, the two ultimate results being the idea of pure form, or that careful imitation of nature, where the importance bestowed to each particular detail ultimately tends towards the diminution of a sense of synthesised whole and to produce the effect of mere juxtaposed facts, while the other tendency has been toward the subservience of detail to the whole, as in the application of fact to functional end; Indian art overwhelmingly rich in detail is enclosed in rhythmic

volume. In this way "the realisation of form is not merely a visual experience but rather the ultimate product of memory and imagination in which the basic element of composition is served in the establishment of definite relations between formal perceptions through which disparate elements can comprise an organic unity which has no existence in nature and is entirely arbitrary." The ultimate success lies in the harmonious relationship of the variety of elements. This quality may apply to results achieved through pictorial representations as to abstract design, and here the general tendency is to confuse the issues. It is too obvious that some idea lies behind distortion, or the emptiest resolution of a problem of rhythm, or the abstract geometrical solution, but in the drawings of Austin Spare the principles are exemplified by certain traditional means, and the natural impulse is to attract to the elements of symbolism more of the values attached to actual objects. But although there may be elements of the conscious in his work, the fact is rather in common with the greater draughtsman of the past, where we discover the similar and unceasing search for the grasp of structural principles and convention is indirectly served and continually reinforced by an intimate knowledge of Nature.

Therefore the problem is with Austin Spare as with the Chinese, not the actual application of abstract principles of design but arriving at an epitomised statement, the design or composition realised rather in the inherent nature of the matter itself, which from consummate mastery of the medium allies itself with the commentary sense of movement – as in the sense of rhythm impressing material things.

Thus if we come to the analogy of the rhythmical movements of the body where the expressiveness and power lies in the co-related order, and to the realisation that those precise aesthetic qualities we discover are not bound in the formal relation but by the fusing secret in the nature of the emotional re-action which directs the artist to selection, and pertaining to consciousness, unites the precise relationship of beauty with truth as subjective and psychological, being the harmonious occupation of consciousness with aesthetic impression, and becomes the natural functioning of the mind itself. Aesthetically then, the line functionality expresses the psychological content through which idea becomes implicit in the form. Thus, the fact that though the symbol is clear or the emotions transcribed seems ever a matter of conjecture, yet the artist seeks ever to make constructions consistent and self-contained which appear to have ultimate value in themselves.

Apart from this, however, art which is more directly expressive of the individual and obviously social emotions, which implies the retention of memory images and the re-expression of them as symbols clothed in analogous form, demands what a certain critic in considering these drawings of Austin Spare's at a recent exhibition at St. George Gallery described as occult initiation. Meaning (interpreting the term in his way), the power to translate ideas into terms of value attached to actual life. Yet, with all our knowledge of the abstruse problems of psycho-analysis, the discovery of the sublimated wish to kill our father and marry our grandmother is not furthering an appreciation of art as art.

Mainly in the drawings of Austin Spare we discover the ideals which inspired the finest of linear artists, and the final aim is incorporate as the principles, which are manifest through the conditions, rather than in the nature of the material employed, which invests him with the capacity, without recourse to symbol, to transcribe fact to idea. Therefore we see more than the object represented, something which arrests and profoundly moves us, even if it were by the exquisite power with which he (to quote again) “alternates those essays in pure classicism with hideous deformities” and which, by virtue of ART cease to be deformities.

For, as he himself has said, “Art is that beauty which may be born of anything; but not by a formula of balance and proportion, beauty itself”; and again, “Ugliness is that which the formula does not allow: hence there is never beauty without this ugliness which becomes transmitted by its super-abundance.” This is nearer the realisation of the aesthetic values of the “harmony of opposites” or the “union of contraries,” which is the “free belief” of art and conditions of “vital allegory.”

Grace Rogers by Austin O. Spare, 1927 (Detail) Image copyright © Fulgur Limited

Yet again as someone has put it, “every artist who carries furthest his own innermost feelings, and poignantly reveals the intimate impulses of mankind, shocks us as manifest revelations of ourselves.” We are affright, as confronted with the scalpel exposed to our disease. For truly are we ever governed by the “complexes” of morality and move continually toward a dream world wherein the ideal balance of mind and matter is stamped with the nature of our evasions. We look to art for mere moments of beauty, modes of escape from reality, achieved by sense of annihilation, which implies too vividly the need for stimulant or sedatives – as Nietzsche puts it, “to make life possible.” Yet art has no necessary concern with medicine and morals, though art can be employed in anything, in what are called unholy as more holy means invested with the grace of art – that consumer of antipathies. The “initiate” in this case is he who can accept his grace seasoned with salt. For has not Emerson, in describing the sceptic, acknowledged him, the mystic, who, unafraid to tread the vestibule of the temple, discovers in the Mount of Vision the beauty is partial and deformed! With such an eye of inward vision did that other philosopher lament:

“I see and have seen worse things; divers things so hideous that I should neither speak of all matters nor even to keep silent about some of them, namely, men who lack everything excepting they have too much of one thing; men who are nothing more than a big eye, a big mouth; or something else big. Reversed cripples I call such men.”

“We are such stuff as dreams are made of.”

Inadequate expression, conglomeration of half-realised experiences – monsters and mutilated fragments. Mediaeval times more picturesque less squeamish, combined the head of dog and serpent’s tail, angels and devils interchange confidence in that grotesquely unsophisticated intermixture of objectivity and subjectivity. Yet whatever the symbols, the function of art remains, the expression of an eternal verity, which, as in the

art of Austin Spare, records a disinterested state of mind as the setting free of a disembodied function of the spirit.

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About this capture
Fulgur Limited Publishers

Pictures of the Occult by a Psychical Artist
First published in The Sphere, 1927

A selection of the extraordinary work of Mr. Austin O. Spare, who renounced material success in Mayfair to immerse himself in the slums of the Borough in the study of magic and the Occult. These pictures, the result of his researches into the hinterland of the soul, are now on exhibition at the St. Georges Gallery.

Satyr by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Steeped in mysticism and the study of ancient magic, Mr Austin O. Spare, once hailed as an infant prodigy, whose work was hung at the Royal Academy when he was only fourteen years of age, is now holding an exhibition at the St. George's Gallery, George Street, Hanover Square.

His work is comparable in its nightmare conception with Dore and in its delicacy to the later manner of Aubrey Beardsley: but although he deals with his subjects from an allegorical point of view, he has neither the brutality of the great illustrator of the Bible, nor the bitter cynicism of the decadent.

Dream Phantasmagoria by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

To his mind, filled as it is with the lore of religions, almost now forgotten, the Borough, where he dwells in penury, is peopled with the beings of the woodland of ancient Greece, the Satyr band attendant on the great god Pan.

These beings, whose name has become a synonym for lust, live, maintains Spare, in their horned horror in the drab streets south of London Bridge. The ribaldry and coarse revelry of the slums is due to the influence of these beings of the Borderland, he believes – and he has materialised them on his canvases.

Some of his work is executed with the faery lightness of silverpoint while other examples are in colour. Certain pictures, such as the "Dream Phantasmagoria" reproduced above, were directly inspired by spirit control, perhaps the first automatic artistry that is the work of one who is both an automatist and an artist.

The Fallen by Austin Spare, 1927. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Too many spirit drawings in the past lacked the technique that renders at least semi-intelligible to the non-elect work of Mr. Spare. The artist believes that much great work – Hamlet for example – was created under psychical impulse, and even when not “automatising,” he ascribes a spirit direction to his brush.

Mr. Spare, who served through four years of the War, is the son of a City policeman and is a skilled worker in stained glass. He utilises self-hypnotism on occasion to stimulate his production and to direct his work, but his hand has been uninspired for as long as three months at a time.

Despite the easy criticism that such work is the outcome of a brain possibly affected by the character of his studies, possibly transcending that of the average, the innate beauty of Mr. Spare’s art sets this exhibition on a level of its own.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Sex in Art

by Clifford Bax

First published in Ideas and People, 1936

The Daily Mail announced, when I was a youth, that the son of a policeman had succeeded, at the age of seventeen, in having a picture hung on the line at the Royal Academy exhibition. Moreover, I had seen a number of Austin Spare's extraordinary drawings - bulky women with stag's heads or hairy Mousterians or queer amalgams of primitive magic and primitive sexuality. And I had greatly admired the power and the distinction of his draughtsmanship.

When we met at a Lyons teashop I recognised at once what an odd and charming person he is. I liked his brawny build and the thick tough strength of his hair. I noticed that he was pallid, and wondered if the air and the food of The Borough were good for him. I noticed and liked his pale eyes which were always honest and often humorous. I realised at once that he was a shrewd though unworldly fellow who knew many aspects of London life which I had known only by hearsay.

Clifford Bax by Austin Spare, 1953. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

At the teashop we planned our quarterly, deciding that it should be called The Golden Hind. We ought, in 1922, to have realised that quarterly magazines of art and literature belonged to the age of silk hats, hansom-cabs, drawing rooms and permanent marriages. It is only in the United States that men are not held in thrall by the past. We

Europeans - and the Asiatics, too - have always some difficulty in realising that the world does move. Spare and I did not understand that a passion for speed and for machinery had cured society of its taste for art and literature. And Spare, making things worse, innocently filled our first number with so many backviews of massive nude females that Chapman and Hall, our publishers, blushed simultaneously, while Mr. Heffer (the Cambridge bookseller) gave one glance at *The Golden Hind*, snorted and sent our traveller packing. The irreverent instantly renamed our quarterly *The Golden Behind*.

Nevertheless, I am glad that we launched it because the duties of co-editorship brought Austin Spare quite frequently from his tenement-flat in The Borough to a thin and tower-like house in St. Petersburg Place whither I had recently moved. Now, a man may change his place of abode without much annoying his friends; but if he also decides to change his mode of life, they will find him hard to forgive. And that is what I had done. Having lived for eight years in a studio, cooking my breakfast while I had my bath, and feeding for the most part upon tinned food, and resenting any occasion upon which I should have to wear evening-dress, what did I now do but rent an elegant house, employ a butler and change every night into a dinner-suit? And as though all this were not sufficiently disconcerting, I had the inconsiderateness to grow (with how much trepidation) a moustache and a small beard. People do not like us to change. They deplore these minute revolutions in the life of anyone whom they know well: but I had realised that a bohemian existence in only one suit of clothes may well be enough when a man is thirty but that when he approaching forty it may become a little ridiculous.

Spare knew the taste of life as it is for people to whom a penny and a ha'penny are very different coins, and he lived in a high bleak barrack-like tenement-block, among men and women in whose life elegance and the arts had no place, and surrounded by their washing and their cats. He said to me once "Don't put 'esquire' on your letters. We've only one other esquire in my block, and they think we're giving ourselves airs." His attractive simplicity came out, too, when he said "If you are ever passing my place, do drop in"; for it is seldom that anybody happens to be passing The Borough unless he lives there.

In the kindness of his heart he had made for me a radio-set, and he came to lunch one day with the purpose of fixing up an aerial on the roof of my empty garage; and because we both liked him so much I invited a guest - Mrs. Norah Rowan-Hamilton - who had been one of Spare's earliest friends and one of mine too.

"If you are fond of animals" he remarked at lunch, "don't come to live in The Borough. The other day some kids threw a cat from a top window to the stone yard below. I had it poisoned." Norah and I, brought up in a kindlier world preserved our British phlegm, "I hate brutality" he went on, "and what with wife-beating and cat-booting, it's all around you in The Borough. I've got a white tabby now - a stray - but she has an ugly wound on her mouth. As a matter of fact, only a few yards from my place there's a little court which everyone there calls 'Catkiller's Alley'. If you go there you quite often see a cat slinking about with no fur on."

"No fur?" cried Norah. "What do you mean?"

"Oh," said Spare, perhaps pitying our innocence, "the men pull the fur off, give the cat a clout on the head, and don't wait to see if they've finished her off or not."

Norah said "Don't you ever interfere?" and then added, with imagination, "I suppose it's too dangerous?"

"Dangerous?" laughed Spare. "There's no danger. All those chaps are cowards. Of course, it's easy enough to be philosophical, to leave life as it is: but we're human beings first and philosophers afterwards. Now and again I do take a hand. The other morning I was in bed when the milk-boy arrived. I heard a howl, and I knew what was happening: so I jumped out of bed and of course I found the boy booting the white tabby. Didn't I just give him a hiding!"

Then, recollecting his philosophy, he observed "Perhaps it is all of no use. What happens down here doesn't correspond with what's happening in the Real World. When I saved the tabby I may have killed four archangels; and it may have been God who was using that boy."

Austin Spare c.1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Becoming more involved within the folds of metaphysics, he expounded a theory that a man's conditions are caused by his subconscious desires. The subconscious mind, being all-wise (he told us), wills the environment that shall strengthen the weak places of the soul: and he commented with a smile, "I suppose my own subconscious desire is to be poor! Whatever you really want, you can get. The want rises first in the conscious mind, but you have to make the subconscious desire it too. And you can do this by inventing a symbol of the thing you want, - wealth, a woman, fame or a country cottage, it's all alike. The symbol drops down into the subconscious. You have to forget all about it. In fact, you must play at hide-and-seek with yourself. And while you're wanting that particular thing or person, you must resolutely starve all your lesser desires. By doing that, you make the whole self, conscious and subconscious, flow toward your main object. And you'll obtain it."

When lunch was over, he climbed on to the roof of my garage and, not foreseeing what would subsequently happen to Gustav Holst, fixed the aerial to a telephone-pole: and just before he went back to The Borough, he gave me a piece of advice which at present I have not needed to apply. "When you find yourself mixed up," he warned me, "in a scrap outside a public-house, hit the other fellow first: you can count on it, he's got two or three pals in the crowd: and then, do a bunk as quickly as you can." After he had gone I told Mrs. Rowan-Hamilton how Spare had once been converted by the Salvation Army in the Waterloo Road. "I was tight one evening," he had told me, "and when I came to, I found a hymn-book in my hand and I was singing at the top of my voice." The hardness of his life had made him canny in some ways, but he had probably never

realised that his work troubled many of those who might have become purchasers. They must have been puzzled by his peculiar form of occultism and they were certainly abashed by the savage sexuality of his early designs. No wonder! Men and women may be animals, but there is now so elaborate a pattern of thought or convention upon the surface of their minds that they are embarrassed if an artist requires them to look into the dark backward and abysm of consciousness. The popularity of Jurgens shows that Park Avenue, Mayfair and Fleet Street can relish sexuality in a book if it is oblique and whispering. Spare shouted his proclamation with the full power of his lungs. And indeed there is danger in too much refinement or too much intellectuality. To lose touch with our basic sexuality must be as unwholesome as it is to lose touch with the soil. There are said to be American women so atrophied in their sex-instinct that they wish to be impregnated through a syringe; and it may have been excessive mentalisation which caused Gauguin to revitalise his instincts in Tahiti. Spare so frequently drew the monsters of the subconscious mind that the world's general understanding of psycho-analysis ought to increase his reputation. People can now look at strange and dreadful dreams which would once have seemed to them without significance and merely abominable: and Spare as an artist has so much power that in old age he may become even rich.

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Poor Painter with Cats

First published in The Leader magazine, 1948

Keeping alive the romantic tradition that painters ought to live in extreme discomfort, somewhere near starvation level, is Austin Osman Spare, who has just held an exhibition at London's Archer gallery, with over 150 studies in "Psycho-Physiognomy" and, to quote his catalogue, "an admixture of spivs, ghosts, hoboes, layabouts, fiddlers and others."

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

Austin Osman Spare, a policeman's son, once looked like being a fashionable painter. But Mr Spare decided to paint in London's Elephant and Castle, choosing as models the ordinary people of Lambeth. He rarely charged more than £5 each for them, but they became collector's pieces.

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

In 1941, fire and high explosive totally obliterated his studio flat, depriving him of his home, his health and his equipment. For three years he struggled to regain the use of his arms and now at last his work is on view again, paintings which he has done in the cramped basement in Brixton where he now lives with eight or nine cats as company.

This studio flat is a mass of litter, the artist himself works in an old Army shirt and tattered jacket. He has no bed. But he still charges an average of £5 per picture.

Austin Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1948

Spare's hobby is the occult. "By turning my head involuntarily" he announces, "I can always see my alter ego, familiars or the gang of elementals that partly constitute my being."

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Magicians in London: A Recollection
by Oswald Blakeston

This extract was first published in *The Uncertain Element*, [1950]

And it was in London, and not in Istanbul, that I met my best black magician. People had told me about him. They said: "He's an old man now, but his hair is still dark and wild. He lives in a tenement. You'd never dream what a lot of magic is still practised there. Why! He can remember when there was a cage of skinned live cats on exhibition in the street, and there was a boy who bit the heads of live rats for a sixpence. It's atmosphere, isn't it?"

Well, there was a strange little card on his mantelpiece. I asked him about it. "That!" he shrugged his shoulders. "That's nothing much. Just a sigil to make it hail tomorrow."

I did the unforgivable thing. In spite of the atmosphere, I said, "Will it?"

"Umph!" he said reproachfully, of course it does depend on "interferences" by others black magicians." His face brightened. "Once," he said, "I put a card up to make it rain. I had to make some days before my influence was sufficiently established to counteract the wishes of others magicians. But when it did rain, my card was so strong I could not get it to stop.

"I said, "That's all right, I've proved my point." I burnt my card and willed the rain to cease. But I had underrated my own power. I had to will for days before the rain actually stopped. Think of that!"

I thought about it, and he watched me with burning eyes to see if I was impressed.

He said: "Have you a match? I used to light cigarettes without matches, but I found it wasted so much power. I must keep my power for the really big things. For instance, I made the mistake of trifling with horses.

Oswell Blakeston by Austin Spare, 1933. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

"I once drew a special pack of cards to tell me the winner. A magic pack of cards. If there were a dozen horses in the race, I laid out thirty cards and concentrated to make the pack tell me the thirtieth horse. That forced my conscious mind to give up, and brought my unconscious into play.

"Well, for a bit I couldn't understand what was wrong. I didn't seem to be making any money. But then it came to me. My magic was right but – the judges were wrong.

"Judges are fallible human beings, you know, and they make errors about the horses and the tape. My magic could only tell me the horse that really won, not the horse which deceived the judges. Of course, this was in the days before the photo-finish.

"But, you see" it doesn't do to trifle."

He leapt to his feet. "I'll show you something," he cried wildly, "I'll show you something."

He picked up a rusty biscuit tin. I wondered if he was going to produce a dried toad or a dead baby. He took out a piece of cheese. Then, with a pocket knife, he delicately removed some pairings.

"For D.P.'s lunch," he said, as he dropped the shavings outside a mousehole. "I call him D.P.," he added; "it's short for Death Posture."

"Is he your familiar?" I suggested.

"He is," the black magician boasted, "the most amazing mouse in London."

We sat watching the hole. I didn't know whether I was expected to will anything, so I tried to fill my mind with cheese.

Presently a mouse peered, sniffed, darted forward, gobbled the cheese, retreated.

"There!" shouted the black magician in triumph, "that was D.P. You see I keep a tame mouse instead of a cat. He relies on the lunch I give him, and so he's jealous of his food he won't allow another mouse near the place."

"Yes," I conceded, "that certainly is magic, But," I went on as a doubt occurred to me, "would you call it black?"

He despaired of me. "I'll have to ask you to go," he said crossly. "There is an inner rite I must perform. But before you go, I wonder if you'd mind giving me a hand to rig up this box camera?"

“Elementals, you know, walk in straight lines. You must know that – the Chinese knew it millions of years ago. Well, there’s a demon due to haunt my room tonight. But no elemental can bear to have his photograph taken. That only happens under the pentagram of compulsion. When my haunt sees the camera he’ll automatically turn round. Then he’ll have to walk in a straight line all round the earth before he can get back to my room. It ought to keep him quiet for a bit.”

I did my best to help with the camera, and as I was about to leave the black magician relented.

“Come back one day,” he invited, “and I’ll show you all your future in a vision on the wall. You’ll like that, won’t you? All your future spread out like a map before you”. Yes, do come back. I think D.P. has taken a fancy to you.”

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Obituary
First published in The Times, May 16th 1956

Austin Osman Spare at home in Wynne Road, 1952.

Austin Spare, an artist of unusual gifts and attainments and even more unusual personality, died on 15th May 1956, in hospital in London at the age of sixty-nine.

A dreamer of dreams and seer of visions, he had that complete other-worldliness so often depicted in romantic fiction and so rarely found in real life. Money meant nothing to him. With his talents as a figure draughtsman he might easily have commanded a four-figure income in portraiture, but he elected to live quietly and humbly, rarely going out, painting what he wished to paint, and selling his works at three or four guineas each. Even in outward aspect he conformed to type – with his untidy shock of hair, small imperial, and a scarf instead of a collar. But for most of his life he did not mix in what are called “artistic circles”. Not Chelsea, Fitzroy Street, Bloomsbury or Hampstead claimed him, but for years a little flat “in the south suburbs of the Elephant”, far removed from the coteries, deep-set in the ordinary life of the people.

Austin Osman Spare was born in Snow Hill, near Smithfield Market, London on 31st December 1886, the son of Philip Newton Spare, a City of London policeman. Leaving his elementary school at the age of 13, he took his higher education into his own hands, working not only at art but at general subjects, in particular the occult. He had some formal tuition at the Lambeth School of Art and the Royal College of Art. He was already exhibiting at the Royal Academy at the age of 16, but in later years ceased to send

anything there. In July 1914 he had his first one-man exhibition, at the Baillie Gallery, showing a number of his so-called “psychic” drawings and some very powerful generalizations of animal nature.

Just after the 1914-1918 war Spare became friendly with John Austen and Alan Odle, figure draughtsmen differing considerably from him and from each other, but each having certain aims in common with his. From October 1922 to July 1924 Spare edited, jointly with Clifford Bax, a sumptuously produced quarterly called *The Golden Hind* for Chapman and Hall. It collapsed for lack of support, but during its brief career it reproduced large scale some really superb figure drawings and lithographs by Spare and others. In 1925 Spare, Odle, Austen and Harry Clarke showed together at the St. George’s Gallery. Two years later Spare showed alone, at the Lefevre Galleries, and in 1930, at the Godfrey Phillips Galleries.

Thereafter Spare was rarely found in the purlieu of Bond Street. He would teach a little from January to June, then up to the end of October, would finish various works, and from the beginning of November to Christmas would hang his products in the living-room, bedroom, and kitchen of his flat in the Borough. There he kept open house; critics and purchasers would go down, ring the bell, be admitted, and inspect the pictures, often in the company of some of the models – working women of the neighbourhood. Spare was convinced that there was a great potential demand for pictures at two or three guineas each, and condemned the practice of asking £20 for “amateurish stuff”. He worked chiefly in pastel or pencil, drawing rapidly, often taking no more than two hours over a picture. He was especially interested in delineating the old, and had various models over seventy and one as old as ninety-three.

During the last war, while on fire watching duty, he was blown up and temporarily lost the use of both arms. His memory was also affected, but in 1946 in a cramped basement in Brixton, he began to make pictures again, starting, as he said, from scratch. In 1947 an exhibition of no less than 163 of the pictures he had painted in the previous few months attracted many people to the Archer Gallery, in Westbourne Grove.

Spare’s alleged “automatic” and “psychic” drawings tended to lack discipline and were on the whole inferior to his “straight” work. The last chiefly comprised nudes, which combined strength and delicacy of a high order and had a wonderful three-dimensional feeling. His minute draughtsmanship may have owed something to the Pre-Raphaelite influence, though in general his art was much more human and full-blooded than that of the “brethren”. Of his technical mastery there can be no doubt. The collection of his drawings may yet become a cult.

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Austin Osman Spare 1886-1956
by Haydn Mackay

Radio script, 1956

There has just died here in London an artist who, though little known to the vast general public, has long been deemed by artists to be one of the most remarkable draughtsmen of his time. I am referring to Austin Osman Spare, who at the age of sixty-nine years departs this world, leaving behind the evidence and influence of his great achievements. Great achievements, whether we regard the superlative craftsmanship of his drawings and pastel paintings; the insight apparent in his writings; the profundity of his speculative incursions in psychology, magic, the Occult and automatic suggestion, or regard only one such aspect of this many-sided-artist.

To in any way adequately describe the work of the artist Spare to an audience unfamiliar with some examples of it is an insuperable problem, for he falls into none of the well-known categories. His normal way of life was that of a visionary obviously impervious to any worldly deficiencies of his material existence; completely indifferent to all the usual urges of self or profit; (money was but the necessary "tram-ticket" that entitled him to conveyance from halt to halt in penurious journeys of travail); Content with the most modest existence in circumstances of frequently material discomfort and to any but Spare, quite inadequate equipment for the purposes in view. Had he been other-wise a very large income as a portraitist was ever within his reach, but he avoided or ignored all such commissions; that he might paint only that to which his vision urged him; and for which he only asked the most ridiculously modest prices.

Spare first exhibited at the Royal Academy at the early age of sixteen. Later he had exhibitions in Bond Street and the galleries of the wealthy; but in still later years he abandoned showing work in any conditions but those of his own devising. And this brings us to Spare's early environment and the later choice of neighbourhood in which to live and which was to supply him with the models and inspiration of much of his work.

He was born, the son of a city policeman, in the City of London, at the end of the 1880's, when the solemn pomp and stilted circumstance of the latter years of Queen Victoria's reign became pregnant with revolutionary expressions in the Arts and was thus doomed to lose its middle-class reputation in the "naughty nineties". Sham Gothic medievalism, hack Renaissance idioms, or decayed Romanticism, were to be ousted by a cynical, vicious, and decadent reaction to the respectabilities of the conventional, but pharisaical, Arts of a lingering Puritanism.

The grotesque and jewelled decadence of the drawings of Aubrey Beardsley opposed the anaemic religiosity of the Burne-Jones cult; the preciousness of the painter Whistler and the writer Oscar Wilde and the affected Pagan elegance of their satellites, the "Aesthetes", opposed the Academic; And the manner of the Baroque swirls and blobs of intricate ornament appearing in the sculpture designs of Alfred Gilbert, heralded the rise

of “L’Art Nouveau”; That fashion which grew like a scandal, and swept like a plague, through the studios of all Western Europe, in the opening years of the 20th Century.

Such was the Art atmosphere that greeted Spare, with his precocious talents, at a most impressionable and tender age. It had its effect in influencing his early work, but with his timely maturity he rapidly developed and outlived it, to evolve an original, individual and distinct expression, firmly based on the great historic traditions of Western Europe drawing; and the best examples of his figure drawing are unsurpassed by any draughtsman of our period. In the sincerity, profundity, the dexterity of his drawing he immediately became conspicuous, and it is this quality, amongst all his many qualities, that most triumphantly justifies all the strange productions of his adventurous, rambling and eternally questing spirit.

And strange indeed was much of his work, for he was early in touch with the esoteric thought of the period, visionary, occult, magic, with which he somehow seemed to bring a precise, stark, and awful significance to the drawing of the most natural object that appeared in his design. Like all truly imaginative work, there was no reliance on a mere vagueness of statement for unknowable mysteries, but rather on an excessive reality given to the incredible. A definition of form, a sharpness of focus, a semblance of textures, that produced the crisp shock of sudden and unpredicted vision; A hidden world suddenly revealed in the glare of a powerful search-light. In the verity of his visionary productions we find him of the company of Blake and Fuseli and their circle, but far superior to any of them in the mastery of representational craft. The English “Pre-Raphaelites” have been suggested as an influence, in view of Spare’s meticulous detail; but I cannot accept that view. He is much more akin to Durer in the engravings and Holbein in the drawing. What is most apparent and of the very essence of Spare’s work is the all-pervading unity of arrangement, of tone, of texture, that is quite alien to the “Pre-Raphaelite” practice.

Spare had some formal training at the Lambeth School of Art and at the Royal College of Art; and brief as was his stay at the Royal College, he has become something of a legend amongst R.C.A students; and many are the artists who have acquired examples of his work. The only mention I ever heard him make of his R.C.A. experience was when he told me that during his period there he had to appear for some small rebellion and with a fellow student before the Board of Education in Whitehall. The most impressive memory he retained of that interview was of a group of very solemn old gentlemen gathered at one end of the longest table he’d ever conceived as possible, even in a dream. An enormous table that stretched in a vast perspective from the end at which, meek and lowly, he and his fellow delinquent stood. The effect of that huge table was all that he seemed to regard as of any significant interest. What decisions were arrived at, affecting his conduct, career or prospects, on that solemn occasion I never learnt from him. The whole incident, apart from the colossal table, had long been dismissed from his mind.

I first came across work by Spare nearly half a century ago, but only came into contact with his extraordinary personality at the close of the First World War. And though I have

seen much of him and his work since he still appears in my memory as the impression he made on me at that first meeting. A pair of appraising eyes set in a pale face; surmounted by a great shock of dun-coloured hair. Too intent on his dedication to be other than careless of mundane appearances or circumstances, he was a slim figure with loose but energetic gait. He was aloof and shy with strangers, especially those who might be deemed to have some social or conventional importance. This, combined with the constant urge of his work, made him something of a recluse. He had a satirical humour, but appeared incapable of personal malice or jealousy or greed. In common with most of those dedicated beings whose persistent and controlling activity is creative work, the essential solitude to such individual endeavour invariably appears to an observer as an uneventful life and lacking in incident. But the work shows the adventures, the excitements survived, the travelling done in that strangest of all the unexplored countries of the mind by such courageous pioneers as was Austin Osman Spare as he mapped his territories of sensation, desire and creative will.

Whilst the greater mass of his work consists of figure drawings and compositions of occult, "psychic" and dream fantasies, he also published various books of drawings, as *Earth Inferno*, and *A Book of Satyrs*; also certain occult and symbolic drawings and writings, such as *The Book of Pleasure* and *The Focus of Life*. He also edited with the poet and "supertramp" W.H.Davies a sumptuous publication *Form*, and with Mr Clifford Bax, a quarterly, *The Golden Hind*; to each of which he was a principal contributor. He also produced a few etchings and lithographs. Mainly he worked in pen, pencil or pastel, but rarely turning to other media.

Spare's automatic or psychic drawings may appear as undisciplined and abstruse; as all such drawings, of their very nature, must appear to be; as also is the case with much of his esoteric writings. But there can be no shadow of doubt regarding the technical mastery of his expression in the figures and the various accessories; animal, vegetable or mineral; mythical or mundane, which ornament and crowd so many of his compositions. He was an exceedingly rapid worker, frequently producing a picture with no more than a couple of hours work; and rhythmic ornament grew from his hand seemingly without conscious effort.

For his nudes he seldom employed professional models, declaring that they were too mannered by art-school practice; and for his portrait drawings, he found his types in the streets of his neighbourhood – the historic but unfashionable Borough of Southwark where for the greater part he had lived and worked. It is a poor over-crowded neighbourhood south of the river and sheltering a most characteristically "Cockney" population; costers and barrow-boys, bruisers and barmen, hucksters and higglers and their women folk, all in their appropriate settings of tenement dwellings; of street markets, and "gin palaces". In these portrait pastels he developed a realism that, whilst still a vital portrait, was yet something more. A searching commentary on type, a meticulous localisation of the individual in the type, a history and a prophecy read from, and into, the forms and features of a head. A collection of these pastel portraits should be publicly owned as a national treasure and housed in one of the London Galleries. As a native of the City, surely the City Guild Hall Art Gallery would be a most appropriate

place, as being of such importance to the age and nation as are, to France, the pre-Revolutionary portraits by that great 18th Century pastelist, Quentin de la Tour. The Windsor collection of Holbein drawings deal faithfully with personalities at Henry VIII's Court; Spare's pastels deal equally faithfully with a vastly different, hitherto slighted, but less narrow strata, of our ever-changing urban communities. As human records of human beings, such works are profitable to human understanding. In this "Age of Common Man" the portraiture of an elite is not the only record worthy of preservation.

In 1918 I found Spare in the Army, he had been placed in the Royal Army Medical Corps, and with the rank of Sergeant, was employed in making drawings for the medical history of the war. Thus was acquired a collection of somewhat perfunctory, but technically impeccable drawings, now in the possession of the authorities. He worked in the solitude of a studio provided by the army, and the only military convention to which he had to conform was the wearing of the uniform; and I have never seen a queerer figure in a soldier's garb. He wore the most dilapidated uniform I have seen outside a refuse dump, and it was worn in the most negligent manner conceivable. It is not surprising that on occasion he was held by the police as a rogue wearing unauthorised badges and uniform, and only released by them on a statement of his authenticity by his commanding officer.

It was in Spare's company that I met the poet W.H. Davies (The Super-Tramp), when they together came to see me to invite me to contribute a drawing or two to the quarterly they were jointly editing. They made an amusing pair, and when we adjourned to a local tavern for lunch, they proved most entertaining conversationalists, with much in common regarding their general outlook on life and human society: a horror of gentile pretensions, of official snobbery, of artistic cliques. But beyond that they parted – Davies, the Welshman, yearned to flee the town and tread the open roads, rest in bosky dells, muse on birdsong or the patient cattle grazing that taught their lesson, whilst Spare, the Cockney, loved the grey city of his birth, and its poorer neighbourhoods and their populace, which fed his humour, his excitement, his profound sense of man's geocentricity in an ever menacing circumstantial existence, of the soul in a gutter of life, and of creative desire entombed in the flesh.

I find it difficult to talk simply of Spare, the man. I think it must be so to anyone who knew him; for in his case a knowledge of the artist so heavily overshadows the simple man. He was normally so retiring, always seeming to protectively efface himself by an assimilation, both in careless attire and Cockney bearing, of the habit and vernacular of his poor neighbours and unprofessional models.

His compositions of magic or occult purpose always bore an air of antiquity. The actual drawings themselves seeming ancient and as being a timeless work rescued from a long past; and dealing with a primordial world of distant memory: The work of the universal "ID" of Freud's psychological system, rather than that of a conscious will. They emphasise no deistic transcendence, but the urge of the senses, the animating dust, and the universal lust of earth-bound sensibility. A brooding inevitability, even in their eccentricities and distortions, informed all, despite the nightmarish incongruities which

haunt them.

That a genuine automatism played a greater part in Spare's work than is to be found in that of any of his contemporaries, is, I think, beyond doubt. And whatever there is to be said for "Surrealist" theories, their most effective expression is to be found in his works. Spare was the first, and I think by far the most convincing "Surrealist" of our times. He did not produce haphazard merely frivolous incongruities for their own sake; for that is not the main characteristics of dreams. Dreams are mainly vivid emblems serving desire or distress. And in the dreams of Spare, desire and distress were eternal and evolutionary, in atavistic resurgence, life succeeding life, self-creating self, and whatever may be deemed of such ideas, they are at least presented by a compelling beauty of craftsmanship.

A really representative selection of Spare's works should certainly, and long since, have been made and acquired for the national collections. But so far as I know, there is only a very early work in the British Museum, a couple of drawings of minor importance in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and one in the National Museum of Wales. Probably the opportunity to acquire typical works by the inspired Londoner at the extremely modest prices Spare was content to ask is now past. The Directors (as the one-time Curators are now styled!) of our public galleries do not seem to have considered the desirability of acquiring representative works by one of the subtlest, searching and profound of our draughtsmen. One who has consistently pursued throughout a lifetime of frequent perplexity and pain, the course of his obvious and curious dedication, quite irrespective of any professional or social profit. Can it really be true that all the opinions of professional contemporaries are worthless? Such of Spare's early days, as those of G.F.Watts, O.M., John Singer Sargent, R.A., Sir Frank Brangwyn, R.A., Rickets and Shannon and a host of other distinguished artists regarding Spare's precocity, and to-day of almost every traditionally competent artist familiar with his mature work? How comes it about that our galleries can afford thousands of pounds for what so many of the profession consider inferior examples of stranger contemporary artists, but could not find a fiver for a Spare during the lifetime of this professionally acclaimed "Cockney" artist whose life of dedication from the cradle to the grave, was spent within a mile or two of our great London galleries and museums.

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Spare Parts

by Ramsey Dukes

First published in Agapé, 1975

The following article is an introduction to Spare's Book of Pleasure. It was written as an appendix to the unpublished Uncle Ramsey's Bumper Book of Magick Spells, then first published in issue four of the occult magazine Agapé in the early 1970s, and then in a slightly modified form for The Sorcerer's Apprentice edition of The Collected Works of Austin Osman Spare with a postscript added to the original version. The essay was long considered to be the best available introduction to Spare's magical theories.

The article summarises The Book of Pleasure, helping the reader to find their own way through Spare's rather difficult prose. It also draws some parallels with other helpful texts. For a more detailed account of practical work with sigils etc I recommend two excellent books; Pete Carroll's Liber Null and Ray Sherwin's Book of Results. [Since writing this there have been several other books on the subject.]

(i)

"On the brink of mystery, the spirit of man is seized with giddiness" thus wrote Eliphas Levi in the Key of the Mysteries. Indeed we cannot live forever in a state of giddiness and so need to hide that brink behind veils. By the very decision to give a name or symbol to the Ultimate (e.g. God, Nothing, Tao) we save ourselves from having to see it face to face; the first veil is put up.

The philosophical system that is easiest to grasp, and the easiest to ridicule, is the one that has the most veils. For example the extreme simplicity of Zen Buddhism makes it less easy to discuss than the complex spiritual hierarchies of some other religions. In this sense Spare's philosophy uses comparatively few veils and this, together with his obscure way of writing, make it difficult to describe his ideas adequately.

For example: a basic theme of his writing is that we are not free, we are the slaves of our beliefs and conventions. This is quite obviously the case when we look at other people. We can laugh at the debutante who sorrowfully cries "Oh Mummy I CAN'T wear the same dress that I wore to Margie's party"; but alas the poor girl is right, she really can't! Consider also the novice soldier who for the first time is asked to kill a man in defence of his country; as he aims the rifle he is in no position of authority, instead he himself is a battlefield on which Patriotism is struggling with the commandment 'thou shalt not kill'. Perhaps the clearest example of all is witnessed by the outsider when he sees a family squabbling, struggling in a net of strong interpersonal feelings which are meaningless to the uninvolved...

In each case the truth of Spare's statement is totally obvious and yet the PRACTICAL use of it flounders when we try to see our own actions in this light. This 'simple' turning inward of our gaze is in fact a basic problem of all applied psychology; and it is such difficulties (rather than the trouble of finding the tongue of a hanged man or the eye of a newt) which the student of Spare's magic will encounter.

Instead of forming our own plan we will turn over the pages of The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love) the Psychology of Ecstasy, and outline Spare's system in the same

sequence as he adopted.

(ii)

He starts with 'Definitions':

The Words God, religions, faith, morals, woman etc. (they being forms of belief) are used as expressing different "means" as controlling and expressing desire: an idea of unity by fear in some form or another which must spell bondage – the imagined limits; extended by science which adds a dearly paid inch to our height, no more.

Kia

The absolute freedom which being free is mighty enough to be "reality" and free at any time: therefore is it not potential or manifest (except as its instant possibility) by ideas of freedom or "means", but by the Ego being free to receive it. The less said of it (Kia) the less obscure it is. Remember evolution teaches by terrible punishments – that conception is ultimate reality but not ultimate freedom from evolution.

Virtue

Pure Art.

Vice

Fear, belief, faith, control, science, and the like.

Self-Love

A mental state, mood or condition caused by the emotion of laughter becoming the principle that allows the Ego appreciation or universal association in permitting inclusion before conception

Exhaustion

That state of vacuity brought by exhausting a desire by some means of dissipation when the mood corresponds to the nature of the desire, i.e. when the mind is worried because of the non-fulfillment of such desire and seeks relief. By seizing this mood and living, the resultant vacuity is sensitive to the subtle suggestion of the sigil.

It is interesting to see that Spare in 1913 was already dismissing science along with religion. In this he was ahead of his time. Crowley, for example, emphasises the positive virtue of science, that it had finally freed us from the tyranny of religion; whereas Spare saw that science too could in turn prove to be a limitation.

The page is decorated with some symbols, including the hieroglyphic symbol for the Kai, or 'ego' in Egyptian psychology. There does not seem to be any connection between this and Kia – I have yet to find the origin of that term, or of the name 'Zos' that Spare uses for himself. In the latter case I only note how often the Z sound occurs in inspirational writing: Zarathustra (Nietzsche's hero), Znuz is Znees (the title of C.F. Russell's autobiography), Jeezus, Zunnus (the last anagram word in the Septem Sermones ad Mortuos) and the mass of Zeds in the gnostic words of power.

Both A.E. (in The Candle of Vision) and Rudolf Steiner independently associate the 'S' and 'Z' sounds with snakes and procreation. In Earth Inferno, Spare's first book, the term Zod-Kia occurs without explanation.

(iii)

The first chapter is entitled 'Different Religions and Doctrines as Means to Pleasure, Freedom and Power'.

He starts by asking "What is there to believe, but in Self?" and then goes on to attack various alternative beliefs, showing how they all flounder because of the basic duality at the root of all consciousness. Instead the wise pleasure-seeker is urged to become a Kiaist and Riding the Shark of his desire he crosses the ocean of the dual principle and engages himself in self-love.

For example: Some praise the idea of Faith. They believe that they are gods (or anything else) would make them such – proving by all they do to be full of its non-belief. Indeed, putting one's trust in faith is a little like trying to overcome a weak head for heights by forcing yourself not to look down: it only works if you repress your imagination. Spare concludes Then, this ambition of faith, is it so very desirable? Myself, I have not yet seen a man who is not God already.

He goes on to criticise prayer – except as a means of producing exhaustion. He criticises those who endeavour to prove the unity of religion; those who elevate 'truth'; those who claim that everything is 'symbolic' (and yet reject modern symbolism) those who say that only knowledge is eternal; and he criticises the ceremonial magicians. In this last example he wins our hearts by saying : They have no magic to intensify the normal, the joy of a child or a healthy person...

The second chapter is entitled 'The consumer of Religion' and describes "Kia, in its transcendental and Conceivable Manifestation". He starts by saying: Of name it has no need, to designate, I call it Kia – I dare not claim it as myself. The Kia which can be expressed by conceivable ideas, is not the eternal Kia, which burns up all belief – but is the archetype of 'self' the slavery of mortality.

The beginning of that last sentence recalls, not inappropriately, the first line of the Tao Te Ching which has been translated, in the Penguin Edition of D.C. Lane:

"The way that can be told
Is not the Constant way"

"The nameless was the beginning of heaven and earth;
The named was the mother of the myriad creatures.
Hence always rid yourself of desires in order to observe its secrets :
But always allow yourself to have desires in order to observe its manifestations."

Which is again appropriate, except that the advice of the last line is more suggestive of the advice which will be quoted later from the Septem Sermones. Spare goes on to say : The Kia which can be vaguely expressed in words is the "Neither Neither." This Neither-Neither is explained in a later chapter. It is a thought process by which Spare endeavours to break through the limitations of dualistic thought in four steps. We start

by considering any quality, for example 'light'. Duality immediately links that to the opposing quality 'dark'. The next step is to consider the combination of these two qualities – as in 'dusk' – and then we attempt to make the next step and meditate upon the absence of those two qualities – the 'Neither-Neither' as opposed to the 'Both-And.'

As a meditation this is reminiscent of the Zen Buddhists' koan by which practitioners attempt to confound reason and thus break through it. One example of this is the well-known koan "What is the sound of one hand clapping"? A very appropriate example especially as Spare later suggests that we try to see light by its own quality, and not in its contrast with darkness.

Spare's own description of the Kia is somewhat confusing. This is perhaps inevitable on account of the very nature of his subject and yet I cannot help comparing it with the, to me, very clear first sermon of the *Septem Sermones Ad Mortuos* by C. G. Jung, where Basilides describes the Pleroma – a possible equivalent to Kia.

This should be read in conjunction with Spare. I will attempt a summary, but it should be borne in mind that this is a poor substitute and that it necessarily omits to answer a lot of objections which are in fact dealt with in the full text of the *Septem Sermones*.

Basilides starts by saying that he begins with nothingness – which is the same as fullness. Nothingness is both empty and full – you might as well call it black, white or whatever you like, for having all qualities is the same as having no qualities. This nothingness is called the Pleroma and in it both thinking and being cease – it is quite fruitless to think about it for it would mean self-dissolution.

Creatura is not in the Pleroma, but in itself. True the Pleroma everywhere pervades Creatura but it is in no way coloured by it or shared with it, just as light cannot be said to colour a completely transparent body. Yet figuratively speaking this makes us parts of the Pleroma and, also figuratively, we are the whole Pleroma. So why does he bother to speak of the Pleroma if it is all or nothing? Answer: he's got to start somewhere! And he starts there to free you from the delusion that there is somewhere some fixed and unchangeable principle. The only thing you can be sure of is 'Change'; but Creatura is what is changeable, and so the only fixed and certain thing.

How did Creatura originate? Answer: it did not. Created beings come to pass, not Creatura. Created being, just as much as non-creation was inherent in the Pleroma and so came to pass. Distinctiveness is a quality of Creatura, whereas the Pleroma has all: distinctiveness and indistinctiveness.

Why go on about 'qualities' of the Pleroma after what has been said? Answer: man, being of Creatura, has distinctiveness as an essence. It is his nature to distinguish things. When we talk about qualities of the Pleroma we learn nothing of the Pleroma, we are really revealing our own nature, or way of thought. We must be true to our nature and go on distinguishing.

Why must we distinguish things? Answer: if we cease to distinguish we fall into the Pleroma and cease to be creatures. "This is the death of the creature. Therefore we die in such measure as we do not distinguish". This is why non-distinction is a great danger for the creature.

At this point it seems that Basilides is recommending that we do NOT strive after Kia, he is telling us of its dangers. One could say that the danger is only to the CREATURE and if we wish to transcend that state then that danger does not concern us. However there are passages where Spare himself refers to the dangers of the freedom of Kia: "Total vacuity is difficult and unsafe for those governed by morality, complexes...."

It must be remembered that the duality is the BASIS of consciousness and manifestation; so that only a TOTAL dissolution can be rid of it. In practice the law of duality will ensure that any attainable ecstasy will tend to alternate with agony. Like a pendulum we swing between states.

What then can the Kiaist gain? To indicate an answer I continue to paraphrase Sermon I.

As was said we need to go through the play of distinguishing qualities of the qualITLESS Pleroma in order to foster our own distinctiveness. These qualities came in pairs: the Effective and the Ineffective, Fullness and Emptiness, Living and Dead, Light and Dark, Good and Evil and so on.

In the Pleroma they are not – being balanced and so void. But as we are the Pleroma itself (see earlier) we have these qualities. But we are of Creatura, and so we do not have these qualities in a balanced and void state; as distinctiveness is of our essence we have them in a distinct form i.e. instead of balanced they are EFFECTIVE. "The Pleroma is rent in us".

We are now at an important point: we are moving from a philosophy of perfection – so far the 'Kia' idea could be said to amount to the perfectly true statement 'if you want to obtain desires then you must give up having desires' – to a liveable philosophy, or system of magic. So I will quote the next paragraph of Sermon I in full:

When we strive after the good or the beautiful we thereby forget our own nature, which is distinctiveness, and we are delivered over to the qualities of the Pleroma, which are pairs of opposites. We labour to attain to the good and the beautiful, yet at the same time we also lay hold of the evil and the ugly, since in the Pleroma they are one with the good and the beautiful. When, however, we remain true to our nature, which is distinctiveness, we distinguish ourselves from the good and the beautiful, and therefore, at the same time, from the evil and the ugly. And THUS we fall not into the Pleroma, namely, into nothingness and dissolution."

With the possible exception of that last sentence this paragraph is absolutely in keeping with Spare's first chapter and his criticism of those who flounder after desire and so also

gain their opposites.

As an example of the practical application of this idea consider Sermon V where Basilides, talking of 'spirituality' and 'sexuality', reminds us that we must not forget to distinguish ourselves from them. They are not OUR qualities, in the sense that we possess and contain them; rather are they of a nature above and beyond us.

So, of course, this way of thinking is out of keeping with our 20th century education (although utterly in keeping with much 'primitive' thought) and therefore it cannot be considered as an instant cure to anyone's troubles. However I would like you to IMAGINE the very great change which does in fact develop in the lives of those who encourage this idea to grow in their lives at the expense of the 'rationalist' hypothesis. Their sexuality for example, is no longer their 'possession'; instead it is something 'without' which visits one. In practice this means that sexuality is no longer a possession which one feels obliged to compare in power with one's own rivals, and there is no more fear of possessing too little or too much of it. Nor is there fear that it is a finite quantity that is in danger of being used up, or atrophying with disuse nor is it something that one can sell to another. Instead it is something which visits one. Therefore one must become the seducer in order to be seduced ♦to encourage sexuality one must make oneself attractive to it; to banish it one has at one's disposal the entire tradition of banishment of spirits. In fact this is an idea to be lived, not discussed.

This first sermon ends with the answer to the paradox: if it is so bad to strive for a quality of the Pleroma, then should we really strive after distinctiveness? We are reminded that in fact the Pleroma has no qualities – we create them through thinking. It is not our thinking but our BEING which is distinctiveness. Therefore must we in fact not strive after 'difference' as such but rather OUR OWN BEING. By striving after our own being we attain our goal; but, alas, thought estranges us from being. So the purpose of all the knowledge given in the Sermon was in fact that it should serve as a leash to constrain thought.

I think that Thelemites would therefore stand and applaud at the end of this sermon!

This second chapter of The Book of Pleasure contains a sentence that demands some apology as it stands. Spare writes "As unity conceived duality, it begot trinity, begot tetragrammaton" In view of the usual nihilistic occult view of creation this is highly eccentric. As we have seen it is the Pleroma which necessarily begets duality ($0=2$ in Crowley's formula) because everything which emerges from it comes with its opposite. (So only even numbers, that is to say the 'feminine' principles, arrive out of nothing) And in no way can the Pleroma be described as 'One thing'. But whereas it is absurd to talk of a man giving birth to a woman (unity begat duality) it is quite in order for a man to be born from a woman (a unity being found within a duality). Once we have the duality we have the foundation of consciousness, and it is consciousness which looks back at the original duality and perceives that it contains two units. Thus consciousness can extrapolate behind that duality and postulate a superior unity, calling it 'the action of extracting a duality from the Pleroma'.

This is of course a construct of consciousness' own workings and so ultimately trash. However it creates new complications because to talk about 'one act of creation' is to postulate a moment of time – to name a 'before' and an 'after'. As Spare says in his next sentence "Duality, being unity, is Time..." Thus we find Saturn or 'Time' ; represented in the first three sephiroth of the Tree of Life even though they do not yet contain sufficient material for three dimensional creation.

Spare closes the chapter with his observation on the inevitable ups and downs of existence. Ecstasy for any length of time is difficult to obtain, and laboured heavily for. With what does he balance his ecstasy? Measure for Measure by intense pain, sorrow and miseries. Various degrees of misery alternating with gusts of pleasure and emotions less anxious, would seem the condition of consciousness and existence. Duality is the law.

At this point the casual reader (I'd be less surprised to find a London taxicab at the South Pole than to find a casual reader still with us) is inclined to drop the book in disappointment. Duality is the law – so Spare has offered us no hope of relief.

However there is a big difference. We may not be liberated from failure and misery, but we may be in a position to use it. Knowing the law of duality brings the possibility of distinguishing ourselves from its working. No more the blind slide into despair but rather the studied descent, and the plan to use that unavoidable despair in order to plan the next high point. This is the key to Spare's practical work, or living magic. I can only say that it does with practice and understanding indeed help to create the possibility of exultation in despair. I end with his nice symbol for creation:

"One form made of two, that is three-fold and having four directions."

(iv)

'Soliloquy on God-Head' is the next chapter: it criticises some modern beliefs.

You disbelieve in Ghosts and God – because you have not seen them? What! You have never seen the mocking ghosts of your beliefs? Yea your very faculties and most courageous Lies are Gods ! Who is the slayer of your Gods – but a God!

The writings of Nietzsche are worth reading in conjunction with Spare, (many passages in, for example, the Dawn of Day have been already marked with this chapter in mind but I hope to restrain myself from quoting). In particular the style and feel of Thus Spake Zarathustra is reflected in Spare's Anathema of Zos (an automatic writing) in such phrases as: Let your pleasures be as sunsets, HONEST... BLOODY... GROTESQUE; together with Zos's references to the need for clean air and solitude.

However Nietzsche had much greater respect for science than had Spare; as was said before, in Nietzsche's time, science seemed to be the liberator rather than the tyrant. Spare asks us to be more critical of what science has given us. In Thundersqueak for

example it is explained how every triumph of experimenting amateur technologists is later annexed as a 'Triumph of Modern Science', whereas in fact the only effect that can be INDISPUTABLY ascribed to science is its ability to STOP certain things from happening – e.g. religion or magic.

Spare describes how science has 'discovered' new diseases, thus creating then in our beliefs so that we suffer them and need to call again on science for their cure. He describes, how 'facts' are produced in opposing pairs: for example the discovery that the sun was millions of miles away rather than a few miles away meant that we had also to believe that it was much more powerful than we before believed – in order to justify the amount of heat we receive from it.

Spare illustrates how you are 'one' with a butterfly in an interesting passage. He adds: So if you hurt the Butterfly you hurt yourself. But your belief that you don't hurt yourself protects you from hurt – for a time ! Belief gets tired and you are miserably hurt!

You are fearsome of entering a den of tigers?.. Yet daily you fearlessly enter dens inhabited by more terrible creatures than Tigers [men that is], and you come out unharmed – why?

Science is the accursed doubt of the possible, yea, of what does exist! You cannot conceive an impossibility, nothing is impossible, you are the impossible! Doubt is delay – time – but how it punishes! Nothing is more true than anything else! What are you NOT – you ever answered, Truthfully?

(v)

The next chapter is called 'The Death Posture.' A name which recalls Basilides's remark that the creature dies in so far as he does not make distinction.

Spare starts by warning that ideas of self in conflict cannot be slain, for it is your resistance that gives them their reality. He advocates a formula of non-resistance: Does not matter – please yourself.

Here he describes the Neither-Neither rule and tells us to remember to laugh at all times, to recognise all things and to resist nothing: then there is no conflict, incompatibility or compulsion as such....'Please yourself' is its creed. That last quote suggests to me that here in 1913 Spare was the mouthpiece for the negative or 'feminine' counterpart of Crowley's very positive "Do what thou wilt". Two poles of the same 93 current as it were.

In support of these passages I could quote the whole of Taoist literature known to me. In the second chapter of the Tao Te Ching is : "Therefore the sage keeps to the deed that consists in taking no action and practices the teaching that uses no words".

I will not quote at length the description of the Death Posture and the kindred practices. There are many preliminary practices as innumerable as sins, futile of themselves but

designative of the ultimate means.

You strain to your full height, standing on tiptoe with neck stretched, hands clasped behind your back and arms rigid: breathe deeply and quickly until you feel giddy and exhausted. This prepares you for the Death Posture; you lie lazily on your back as in a yawn, sigh and smile. Forget time and the world.

Or else stare hard at yourself in a mirror until the vision crumbles, the effort is forgotten and you have a feeling of unreachable immensity. This should be practiced before the actual Death Posture in order to give some idea of the mental state.

Let him practice it daily, accordingly till he arrives at the centre of desire. Thus by hindering belief and semen from conception they become simple and cosmic. (The latter being a reference to the alchemical transmutation of sexual energy).

I like this sentence: The primordial vacuity (or belief) is not by the exercise of focussing the mind on a negation of all conceivable things bit by doing it now, not eventually. It suggests a quasi-Zen story which might describe a pupil who asks Spare how to achieve liberation and receives the answer "There ! you've missed it". In other words: at any instant liberation is so close that the very act of asking the question was to miss by delay an opportunity to jump out of time and grab it.

It was not at all clear to me what the connection could be between Spare's magic system and the Egyptian system with its richness of Gods until I recalled the remarkable 19th and 20th verses of the eleventh chapter of the Divine Pymander of Hermes as given in G.R.S. Mead's Thrice Greatest Hermes as 'Mind unto Hermes'. I quote part of the 20th verse which bridges this gap quite comfortably, being highly appropriate to Spare's work, yet surely of Egyptian inspiration:

"Then in this way know God; as having all things in Himself as thoughts, the whole Cosmos itself.

If, then, thou does not make thyself like unto God thou canst not know him. For like is knowable to like alone.

Make then thyself to grow to the same stature as the Greatness which transcends all measure: leap forth from every body; transcend all time; become Eternity; and thus shalt thou know God.

Conceiving nothing as impossible unto thyself, think thyself deathless and able to know all – all arts, all sciences, the way of every life.

Become more lofty than all height, and lower than all depth. Collect into thyself all sense of all creatures – of fire, and water, dry and moist. Think that thou art at the same time in every place – in earth, in sea, in sky, not yet begotten, in the womb, young, old and dead, in after-death conditions.

And if thou knowest all these things at once – times, places, doings, qualities and quantities; thou canst know God"

In his next chapter 'The Cloudy Enemies Born of Stagnant Self-Hypnotism', Spare endeavours to clarify for us his use of the word 'Belief', natural belief rather than the conscious 'faith' that he dismisses in his first chapter. He says:

"The Nature of belief equals all possibilities ultimately true by identification through culture to an idea of time, so what is not timely is not true, and what is not true, prognostication. Thought of one thing implies the possibility of another idea as contradicting but not dissociated, belief is to make "one" more convincing.

The Centre of belief is love for one's self, projecting environment for fulfillment but allowing its distortion to simulate denial, an ambition to become ulterior to self-desire, but you cannot get further than the centre, so one multiplies (believes) in order to be more unaware of the fundamental."

Here Spare is obviously talking of different levels of belief, indeed he refers to those in desire as refusing to believe what they believe. It is the most deeply unconscious belief that projects the basic matter of the environment, the lesser and more conscious beliefs merely add fleeting impressions or distortions until we come to complete consciousness which is baffled by this environment and struggles to master it. Thus the very conscious desire for, say, riches is going to evoke opposition from the environment, as it is inevitable that at some level there must be a belief which places a limit on one's potential wealth. This schism, or blindness, is necessary for we are escapists. If nature did not pretend to surprise us we would fall back into self.

The basic belief of science (and so of a fairly important part of any scientist's mind) is that the universe is ultimately dead and boring. The advance of science slowly kills the universe but there are little bursts of surprise on the wavefront. Television regularly announces amazing new discoveries or theories which threaten to overturn scientific thought – but we hear no more of them. Either they too prove boring or else they are clobbered to death in turn.

So we see that nature is in fact playing with science, throwing her scraps like feeding a caged monkey with nuts. Thus she is ever saving science from falling into the horror of ultimate success. The burning ecstasies of hopeless love illustrate how greater denial brings greater desire and less danger of reality.

So effective magic requires that we get our desire away from the Great Abortionist and down into the unconscious. The sigil system of Spare's is designed with this purpose in mind.

At last this chapter provides the cynic with the disappointment he invites. Spare does not overlook his philosophy's own limitations. We must use the Neither-Neither everywhere, we must disperse all belief in Spare's own writing by the Neither-Neither. Indeed we must dispel the conception of The Neither-Neither by the Neither-Neither and believe it is 'not necessary. Some of us will find that rather easy!

For another account of the transcending of dualities by their annihilation see the

remarks on the Mystical Marriage in Aleister Crowley's Liber Aleph – chapters 20-25 in particular.

(vii)

In 'Self Love as a Moral Doctrine and Virtue' we have a chapter which could almost have been assembled from quotes from Nietzsche and the Tao Te Ching. Consider the opening sentences. "The criterion for action, is freedom of movement, timeliness of expression, pleasuring. The value of moral doctrine is in its freedom for transgression. Simplicity I hold most precious." Nietzsche would also have been happy to read:

"The True teacher implants no knowledge, but shows him his own superabundance Which is nearer you, self-love and its immorality, or love and morals? Perfect charity acquires, hence it benefits all things by not giving. Knowledge is but the excrement of experience."

In the comparison with the Taoist doctrine I will present Spare's quotes from this chapter in alternation with Tao Te King quotes, labelling them S and T accordingly.

S: Are not the most simple things in the world the most perfect, pure, innocent, and their properties the most wonderful?

T: The Uncarved Block though seemingly of small account is greater than anything that is under heaven.

S: When faith perishes then duty to moral doctrines perishes, we are without sin and endure for ever in all-devouring love.

T: Banish human kindness, discard morality, And the people will be dutiful and compassionate.

S: It is because I know without learning...

T : Therefore the sage... learns to be without learning.

S: Control is by leaving things to work out their own salvation...

T: Governing a large state is like boiling small fish [i.e. they must not be over-handled].

S: He is akin to the great purpose. His actions explained for him, good seen of his evil, without knowing, everyone satisfied with his will".

T: Therefore the sage takes his place over the people yet is no burden: takes his place ahead of the people yet causes no obstruction. That is why the empire supports him joyfully and never tires of doing so.

In illustrating these parallel quotes are we trying to prove that Spare has cribbed from earlier sources? No. Instead we are trying to get over the difficulty that Spare's term 'Self-Love' will be repulsive to many of us because it suggests something that we think we know about, and despise. But I ask you, is your idea of selfishness really deserving of the word 'Love' in 'Self-Love'?

By taking two, at first sight very different, texts and finding in them some similarity in their liberating ideas we hope to have illustrated alternative routes to Spare's theory which will help to dilute initial misunderstanding. On the other hand we've also made it possible to treble the misunderstanding!

A final cheek-moistening quote from Spare: May the idea of God perish and with it women; have they not both made me appear clownish?

(viii)

In the 'Doctrine of Eternal Self-Love' earlier passages are summarised and further illustration of the qualities and merits of Self Love given.

If this book had a contents list, the title of the next chapter would draw our attention straight away; it is 'The Complete Ritual and Doctrine of Magic.' Firstly he mentions secrecy, then he gives a definition of magic that would please an alchemist: Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times.

Spare then reminds us that we must avoid "Deliberation, over-consciousness and concentration". This is the most tricky part, the 'letting go' of the desire so that it can speed to the attainment of its goal; for conscious desire does not work. Nor will we need to hallucinate.

The process he describes is for those who have not transcended the law of duality (what a relief!) and so it needs to work within that law. Therefore the magician must wait until he has another desire that is of similar intensity to the one he wishes to achieve. This desire will then be sacrificed in order that the first should be attained. An example would be for the magician to choose a time when a friend has finally let him down, his belief in his friend has then collapsed and the sacrifice of this friendship will answer the purpose: This free entity of belief and his desire are united to his purpose by the use of sigils or sacred letters.

So the practitioner is in a state of despair, he constructs a sigil to formalise his wish and he seats himself in meditation. He calms his mind of all thought except of that one visualised sigil. (It is no longer a 'wish' that is in his mind, but rather a simple geometric shape). In meditation he draws his consciousness slowly into one part, so that no outside impressions disturb.

This produces a feeling of detached calm, of balance which recalls the passage in Crowley's Book of Lies: "The Universe is in equilibrium; therefore he that is without it, though his force be but a feather, can overturn the Universe".

Only the sigil is retained in thought, it is to be used as the 'chalice'. Withdrawing his consciousness to a point gives a feeling of surrounding immensity. he is the point, around him is infinity – Crowley would describe this as Hadit and Nuit and indeed the ultimate marriage to which he refers is here reflected. For Spare says he must now imagine a union taking place between himself (The mystic union of the Ego and the Absolute). This should produce a sexual ecstasy, but it is not desired that it should become physical in manifestation. The nectar of this ecstasy – The syllabub of Sun and Moon – should be slowly sipped from the chalice.

The correct mental state should be one where he is beyond all desire, the original object of the operation is forgotten and no longer of interest, except that he is still holding this apparently meaningless sigil in mind.

But should he fail, and still be yearning for this desire, then he is in danger of being obsessed by it. Instead of being tidily packaged and dropped deep into the unconscious the desire is free to take over his mind at this moment of extreme vulnerability. All the free energy of his original disappointment is at its disposal.

(ix)

So the next chapter is a 'Note on the Difference of Magical Obsession (Genius) and Insanity'.

He criticises spiritualism in a way that is customary amongst magicians. Whereas the magician consciously chooses an obsession, and therefore has ultimate power over it through knowledge of how to bind it, the passive medium lays himself open to unknown obsessions. Should the uninvited obsession in his mind become as strong as his own Ego then there is a split in personality, a loss of control.

Spare concludes that Disease and Insanity arise when there is a free energy within, which has no role to play in the vital economy. This free energy, which should have been used to vitalise a sigil, is like an unemployed work force which, having no part in the vital economy, will seek expression through resistance. (This suggests an analogy with some theories about cancer cells).

(x)

The next chapter called 'Sigils' (subtitled 'The Psychology of Believing') tells us very little about sigils, except that it reminds us at the end that the magical sigil should not be allowed to return to consciousness and known, but must be repressed and forgotten.

Spare suggests that the state of mind most productive of genius is one which is open to all perceptions and is immoral in that it allows free association of ideas without the strict rules of past belief or knowledge.

He asks what has happened to our childish wonder when we used to see things for the first time and marvel at them, asking 'childish' (i.e. philosophical) questions. Is it not that the world is now sterilised by our patterns of 'knowledge' (i.e. beliefs), which are like a curtain between us and surprise?

The difference between this receptivity and the scorned receptivity of the spiritualist in the last chapter is clearly one which calls for care – or at least 'innocence'!

(xi)

Here follows a nice chapter called 'The Sub-Consciousness'.

He begins by announcing that all geniuses have active sub-consciousnesses, and they also have some, not relevant, powerful interest or hobby which serves to distract consciousness from their aim from time to time, with the result that the subconscious can work on it. Thus it is that inspiration comes at odd moments. It DOES demand a previous exhaustion of concentration but it is unlikely to arise at that time, but rather when the consciousness has wearily looked away, or we have 'slept on it'. (A booklet by W.H. Easton called Creative thinking and How to Develop it reprinted from the August 1946 edition of Mechanical Engineering' supports this observation).

Thus it is that we must forget our wish once it is sigillised. An important note is that it is no good to wish the opposite as such, because that is too reminiscent of the original wish; instead we must consider irrelevant topics.

Spare' s idea of the sub-consciousness is more akin to Jung' s Collective Unconscious than any lesser function. Assuming an evolutionary history, he points out that just as our evolutionary history is illustrated in the development of the foetus, so also is it registered in our whole being. If the human brain has developed from the basic mammalian brain – rather than having been miraculously and independently created – then its deeper ('deeper' for the evolutionary growth is apparently outward) structure must be common to all mammals including man. Progressing backward, the different branches of evolution converge and we find that we contain the blueprints for all creation right back to our cell structure which reflects the earliest forms of life.

So, by regressing into this 'Storehouse of Memories' we can contact all the strata of previous life forms. But evolution is largely a process of increasing complexity – resulting in decreasing competence and ability. By the slow processes of conscious thought Man has to struggle to overcome his obvious limitations. His technology has provided him with the swiftness of the leopard, the ability to fly, and resistance to the seasons; yet he is still not as mighty as the microbe! However we can contact these deep layers by the use of Spare' s sigils and can thus tap their powers directly.

The only reason why our customary methods of learning and study ever produce results is that they can produce this exhaustion which diverts the concentration.

All ritual and ceremony is worthless – originally devised to amuse and later to deceive. But, as is customary, the deceivers end up by deceiving themselves more than their victims.

(xii)

In 'Sigils. Belief With Protection' he describes his system of sigils. The exact process is not really important.

Throughout the book his illustrations are decorated with beautiful sigils of different styles. He has his own magical alphabets – he uses six different alphabets in this book and does not explain any of them, because a magical alphabet is a set of symbols you devise to communicate with your subconscious and so should be of your own private

design (like the perfect 'personal' tarot pack). "Sigils are monograms of thought".

He suggests that we write in block capitals and superimpose the letters into a monogram. So 'WOMAN' could become for example :

In this way then he shows how the desire 'This is my wish to obtain the strength of a tiger' can reduce to a single monogram.

He goes on to describe methods of use in a passage which makes one wonder whether he is amplifying the instructions of his 'Complete Ritual' or whether he is giving an alternative approach. He talks of obtaining vacuity by some means, quoting as good examples: mantras and asana, women and wine, tennis and patience, or walking in concentration. He adds that none of these are necessary to someone who has for a moment attained the state of beyond-duality, as by the Neither-Neither; so perhaps this is a 'lesser' magic for those who have not mastered the Complete Ritual earlier discussed?

Indeed it appears that Spare has followed the best scheme for a book on practical magic: he has started with the theory of perfection – and thus repelled the merely curious – has proceeded to describe his 'High Magic' and thus repelled dabblers – and only now is he telling us 'how to do spells'.

When one is exhausted the sigil form is held in mind until it grows vague and vanishes – taking with it the desire.

(xiii)

The next chapter on 'Symbolism' extends the theory to symbols in general. He describes how an artist can know a truth in symbol form long before the scientist uncovers it. The Egyptians in this way understood the theory of evolution – as reflected in images of their gods – but they only understood it as far as was useful in their lives; they did not pursue this knowledge as we have done.

(xiv)

His views on art are enlarged in 'Automatic Drawing as a Means to Art'. He provides a parallel with his law of self-love which had been praised as a law which permitted its own transgression; for the laws of art exist and yet they need not tyrannise. As soon as one law begins to dominate we are free to create a whole new art form by breaking that very law.

He describes how to use a sigil as a basis for an automatic drawing. First you train the hand to be free of inhibition, to wander freely in easy loops and curls (as distinct from the manic scribble of frustration). Then a sigil is used to tap the subconscious level corresponding to the desired picture (he illustrates a drawing based on a bird karma) whilst the consciousness is constrained elsewhere – for example by staring at your thumb in a moonbeam's light until "it is opalescent and suggests a fantastic reflection of yourself..."

(xv)

He finishes with the chapter 'On Myself', in which he questions all he has done, and his worth or 'right' to do it. So cautious is he that he does not even dare to fully believe his own ideas and yet: "Poor though I be my contentment is beyond your understanding."

It is difficult to restrain oneself from asking a question about Spare which is only a slightly less subtle form of the old wisecrack: "If you're so clever why aren't you rich?". After all if it was really Einstein's genius which has lead to the discovery of the atomic power which now holds the world in balance, why did he fail to become a world dictator? Can you really believe that he did not try?

The Tao Te Ching says:

I alone am inactive and reveal no signs,
Like a baby that has not yet learned to smile,
Listless as though with no home to go back to.
The multitude all have more than enough.
I alone seem to be in want.
My mind is that of a fool – how blank !
Vulgar people are clear.
I alone am drowsy
Vulgar people are alert.
I alone am muddled.
Calm like the sea;
Like a high wind that never ceases.
The multitude all have purpose.
I alone am foolish and uncouth.
I alone am different from others
And value being fed by the Mother.

Austin Spare ends with the sentence:

Alas the futility of the idea of God has not yet reached its limit, all men are liars, appear striving for insanity its climax: while I alone as one prematurely aged, reason tottering on its throne, remain sane, in positive chastity, confessing no conscience, no morals – a virgin in singleness of purpose.

(xvi)

In this essay I have not mentioned his illustrations e.g. 'The Death Posture : Preliminary Sensation Symbolised' where the figure has no head and thus recalls the 'on not having a head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare's life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure's 'head' meditation (instead the face is in the heart region). Nor have I considered Spare's life history. But I hope that these notes will encourage readers to persevere with The Book of Pleasure.

For the nature of Spare' s writing is such that it is possible to read the whole book for the first time and gain absolutely nothing from it. However do not be discouraged, repeated reading is satisfying. At least Spare has the decency to make his books SHORT.

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Introduction to The Book of Pleasure
by Kenneth Grant

First published in The Book of Pleasure, 93 Publishing, 1975

Austin Osman Spare was born at Snowhill, London, in 1886. Apart from William Blake, John Martin, Aubrey Beardsley, Sidney Sime, and a mere handful of others, England has produced no artist to equal Spare for sheer ability and imaginative fecundity.

Spare was not only a graphic artist; he wrote four books on what he described as symbolic sorcery The Book of Pleasure (1909-1913), The Focus of Life (1918-1921), Anathema of Zos (1924) and The Book of the Living Word of Zos (1951-1956), a collection of aphorisms and magical formulae which remains unpublished to this day.¹

Spare published some of his drawings in books such as Earth Inferno (1905), A Book of Satyrs (1907), and in periodicals; he also illustrated a few books by other writers, but the four works mentioned above are all that survives of his extensive occult researches. They trace the evolution and development of the curious system of sorcery with which he was preoccupied until his death in 1956. They were, however, mere punctuation marks, pauses, between the steady outflow of graphic work which he produced almost continuously during an obscure, outwardly uneventful and impoverished existence.

Although Spare had no specific teacher where his art was concerned,² he did have a teacher – or perhaps guru would be a more appropriate term – in a “magical” sense. During his most impressionable years circumstances led him into the company of a self-confessed witch, a mysterious Mrs. Paterson who befriended him and initiated him into the mysteries of her craft. He was extremely reticent about Mrs Paterson. All that I was able to elicit from him during the eight years of friendship was that she was very old when he met her and that she claimed descent from a line of Salem (New England) witches that Cotton Mather had failed to eradicate.

Spare did not get on with his mother and he looked upon Mrs Paterson as a “second

mother". What little he said about her explains much of his work and his life-long devotion to the occult. She was able to transform herself on certain occasions into a woman of alluring loveliness: this she had done in his presence as a proof of her magical powers.³ Furthermore, she gave him the keys whereby he gained access to the Witches' Sabbath, the genuine extra-terrestrial event of which the popular version is but a debased and grotesque parody. It was during his exultation to the dimension where this event occurs that he was taught how to explore the subconscious with the use of sentient symbols and the alphabet of desire described in [The Book of Pleasure]. These methods, once demonstrated, had to be brought down and "earthed", and it took several years for Spare to integrate them with his own creative techniques.

The Book of Pleasure embodies the first vague searchings into the subconscious regions that he was to explore more fully in later books, for it should be understood that there was no creed of the Zos and the Kia – the Imagination and the Will – in the teachings he received at the Sabbath; they were of a purely practical and magical nature. It was Spare who wedded the practices of witchcraft to the doctrines of the Neither-Neither and the Atmospheric "I", which he interpreted with fantastic manual dexterity. These doctrines were inspired by his early studies, for Spare was an omnivorous reader, and some of his more obvious influences – from Laotze to Aleister Crowley – are readily apparent.

Spare was drawn to Crowley in 1910 when he became a member of the Argenteum Astrum,⁴ shortly after contributing some of his drawings to Crowley's periodical, The Equinox.⁵

Spare claimed to be one of the first surrealists. He had visualized the irrational and transcribed his vision directly from subconscious strata of the psyche; he was also able to galvanise primal centres of awareness by a formula of atavistic resurgence that few artists – and fewer occultists – have succeeded in re-activating with impunity to their work or to themselves.

The Book of Pleasure contains a unique method of obtaining control of the subconscious energies latent in the human mind in the form of primal atavisms. It is evident that if such energy can be tapped and channelled, it can be directed to creative or destructive ends on a scale infinitely beyond anything achievable by the mind in the more limited state that characterizes "waking" consciousness. But the subconscious does not yield to conscious suggestion for it is founded on sensation, not upon thought, hence a tactual and visual means must be employed if it is to be penetrated and permeated with the vitalizing current of will or desire. The process must be symbolically enacted, and its intent not consciously formulated, for "unless desire is subconscious, it is not fulfilled". A method had to be found of by-passing the conscious mind and planting the desire directly in the soil of the subconsciousness. To this end Spare evolved his own system of sentient symbols which took on a secret meaning and which constituted a "sacred" alphabet of desire of which "each letter in its pictorial aspect relates to a Sex principle". From this alphabet it is possible to construct the words of a mysterious language of sensation that reifies the imagery of appetite.

Spare believed that the hieroglyphics of ancient peoples such as the Egyptian and Amerindian are the remains of an occult language. That the Egyptians practised a form of sorcery involving a process similar to that of Spare's formula of atavistic resurgence is suggested by the fact that the hieroglyphics are usually in zoomorphic form.

It is known that the priests of antiquity assumed animal-headed masks when performing rituals designed to produce magical effects; also, that when dormant forces were awakened, the magician was shaken to the very depths of his being as he manifested the atavisms that his spells had invoked. The convulsions of Tibetan "oracles"; the strange phenomena of spirit possession common to most peoples of antiquity are proof of Spare's theory; proof also that some cosmic forces then possesses the human vehicle and enables the magician to perform superhuman feats.

The mainspring of the formula of atavistic resurgence is – as one might suppose – a form of sexual sorcery. The Adepts of old concealed the process from the eyes of the profane (i.e. those whose ineptitude would destroy them), for once these atavisms are unleashed, magical obsession occurs and there is no reversing the course of events any more than one can reverse the flow of semen on the point of its leaping forth. If the magician is unable to control the power he has invoked, or if he is unable to permit its unhindered movement as it wells into consciousness, then he is literally blasted into death or insanity.

The secret of this sorcery is analogous to that taught by Crowley in his Ordo Templi Orientis (O.T.O.) where it was – and still is – the fulcrum of magical power and the means of gaining access to trans-human dimensions and of communicating with the denizens of other worlds.

Black Eagle by Austin Spare, c.1936. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Spare maintained that he was in communication with extra-terrestrial Intelligences and conscious forces possessed of superhuman power and knowledge. He referred frequently to Black Eagle,⁶ who inspired many of his "magical" drawings. Black Eagle seems to have been a concentration of sinister trans-cosmic current which, according to H.P. Lovecraft,⁷ had been tapped in its primordial phase by the witch cults of New England. Perhaps Black Eagle was the alter ego of Mrs Paterson, for it was not long after her death that this current began to manifest in Spare's work.

Whatever the identity of Spare's genius – Mrs Paterson, Black Eagle, or one of the "host of familiars" by which he was habitually surrounded – the fact remains that Spare produced a large amount of work during abnormal states of consciousness or self-induced trance. He was not mediumistic in the usual sense of the term, nor did he produce automatic drawings in the way that spirit mediums produce automatic texts. Rather, Spare transmitted his work in much the same way that The Book of the Law and other magical writings were transmitted by Aleister Crowley,⁸ i.e. he entered consciously and magically into communication with superhuman Intelligences.

Towards the end of his life, when Spare lived more or less reclusively in a Dickensian South London slum, he was asked whether he regretted his lonely existence. "Lonely!" he exclaimed, and with a sweep of his arm he indicated the host of unseen elementals and familiar spirits that were his constant companions; he had but to turn his head to catch a fleeting glimpse of their subtle presences.

I have described some of Spare's transactions with his "host of familiars" in *The Magical Revival*, but the reader of *The Book of Pleasure* will have little difficulty in imagining what these creatures were like. Imagination is the operative word, for Spare's sorcery is a form of veritable imagination or image-making; of "dreaming true". He exalted the imagination above every other faculty and claimed that "dreams shall flesh" if the requisite ability to reify them has been absolutely mastered. Herein lies the key to his sorcery; the ability to "visualise sensation" and to convey a world of imaginative reality to the observer.

Augustus John regarded Spare as one of the great graphic artists of his time, and many years earlier John Singer Sargent, G.F. Watts, George Bernard Shaw, and others praised him in similar terms. Spare sent a copy of *The Book of Pleasure* to Sigmund Freud who described it as one of the most significant revelations of subconscious mechanisms that had appeared in modern times.

Whatever the value of Spare's contribution to art and psychology, his contribution to experimental occultism is supreme, for he discovered a method of reifying the dream world under the controlling aegis of the fully conscious will.

KENNETH GRANT

Winter Solstice 1974 e.v.

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NOTES

Subtitled *The Zoetic Grimoire of Zos*. Zos was Spare's "magical" name. A selection of these aphorisms, together with an introduction to Spare and his work is to be published shortly by Frederick Muller Ltd., London, under the title *Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare*, by Kenneth Grant. [Published in *Zos Speaks!*, Fulgur Limited, 1999]
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He was a student at the Royal College of Art in Kensington, London. back to text

A similar phenomenon occurred in the presence of Aleister Crowley when an ageing sorceress transformed herself into a "young woman of bewitching beauty", for purposes of vampirism. See *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (ed. Symonds and Grant), chapter 42, Jonathan Cape, London, 1969 back to text

The Order of the Silver Star. back to text

The Equinox, "The Encyclopaedia of Initiation", appeared in eleven numbers, ten of which were published between the years 1909 and 1913. Two only of Spare's drawings

were reproduced. See The Equinox, vol. 1, number 2, pages 140 and 161. [back to text](#)
See The Magical Revival (Frederick Muller Ltd. 1972), plate facing page 149, for a reproduction of Spare's impression of Black Eagle, painted in 1946. [back to text](#)
Howard Phillips Lovecraft (1890-1937). The New England writer whose tales of terror involve traffic with extra-terrestrial entities. [back to text](#)

See Crowley's Confessions. [back to text](#)

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Exploring Spare's Magic
by Lionel Snell

First published in The Divine Draughtsman, Beskin Press, 1987

INTRODUCTION

The Book of Pleasure describes Spare's magical system and its philosophical basis. In it he introduces an ultimate called "Kia" (analogous to the "Tao", the Cabalistic "Unmanifest", or Jung's "Pleroma") from which all manifestation stems via a process of refraction through the principle of duality: we perceive, for example, black and white because they are manifest as a polarised pair, in the Kia they exist only in potential, being undistinguished and so unmanifest. It is clear from elsewhere in his writing that Spare was acquainted with Boehme's tract "On the Supersensual Life", where the disciple asks the master how he can come to know the supersensual life and is told "when thou canst throw thyself into THAT, where no creature dwelleth, though it be but for a moment..."

As humans we are caught up in dualities, divided against ourselves and ever seeking completion by living in desire, our universe being fragmented by our beliefs. Spare advocates a turning back to Kia and the end of all belief, denying all the dualities by his "neither neither": think of a manifestation, eg "white"; not white implies black; neither white nor black implies what? say grey; neither black, white nor grey implies what? ... and so on until our imagination is exhausted and consciousness teeters on the brink of the void – as in the Buddhist "not this, not that" meditation. Thus we get to know the Kia, and Freedom.

To practice Spare's magic one must disentangle a conscious desire from one's web of conscious and semi-conscious beliefs, distilling the essence of that desire into a simple sigil with no conscious associations, then carrying that sigil back into the Kia by exhausting oneself and collapsing into what he describes as "the death posture" – a total flop-out with no consciousness other than the awareness of the sigil, until that too fades. For greatest effect this should be done at a time of despair or disappointment, when some other desire has been thwarted and there is a pool of frustrated libido – "free belief" he calls it – to fuel the operation.

Such a bare description of his magic doesn't do it great justice. It is best to read his original works together with the commentaries listed at the end of this essay*. Rather than repeat existing material, this essay suggests some further ideas for research.

THE BIRTH OF AN AEON

In 1904 Austin Spare wrote – or rather “created” – his first book, which was published in 1905 as *Earth Inferno*: “created” because this book contains more images than words, and half the words in it are themselves quotation from other sources. The result is pretty incomprehensible – even with hindsight.

In the wake of the “fin de siècle” decadence, was this incomprehensibility just a deliberate attempt by a trendy young artist to create an aura of mystery and glamour? Reading *Earth Inferno* I have the impression of someone who has passed through despair to receive a glimpse of mystical truth, and who is now struggling to portray that realisation. It looks like a revelation which fails to communicate (to me) the essence of what the artist experienced. The fact that nine years later he is still earnestly trying to explain his discovery, and with slightly greater success, in his *Book of Pleasure* does confirm a genuine desire to teach rather than mystify.

In that case, what is Spare trying to communicate? Nothing less than an entire philosophy of life and magic; but one so simple yet so difficult to grasp that it is perhaps best approached by comparison and contrast with other better known systems. I begin with some comparisons.

CROWLEY AND SPARE

The opening words of *Earth Inferno* are a picture caption (dated 1904), which ends with a prophecy: “Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit/And with it the resurrection of the Primitive Woman”, so Spare is announcing some sort of turning point in history. In that same year Aleister Crowley received his *Book of the Law* which announced the birth of a new age. Interestingly one element of this revelation is a celebration of the “scarlet woman” – a female archetype unchained and reminiscent of Spare’s “primitive woman”. This element is even more clearly present in the work of Dion Fortune. In 1904 she too was writing her first book: as a young girl she was finding inspiration for her schoolgirl poetry on the coast near Weston Super Mare, an inspiration which later blossomed in the book *The Sea Priestess* set in that place and concerned with a magical operation to liberate society from the Victorian straight-jacket and announce a new female archetype – the priestly woman of power.

These coincidences suggest that Spare might have “tuned into” what one would call, depending on one’s own beliefs, a ferment of ideas, a new current of thought, the spirit of the times, or the birth of a new aeon. There is other evidence of this surge of revolutionary thinking around 1904: this was the year when Jung became drawn to Freud and his concept of the “unconscious”; it was the year of another explorer of the unconscious – Salvador Dali; it was the time of Steiner’s disenchantment with theosophy which led to the birth of “anthroposophy”. Other works completed in 1904 to be published in 1905 include Einstein’s special theory of relativity, and his paper on the

photoelectric effect which won him the Nobel Prize in 1921 and which provided the first strong evidence to support the newly formulated quantum theory.

All in all 1904 was a most interesting year, and this was put most clearly by Crowley when he announced it as the year of the birth of a new aeon. So let us begin by comparing Spare's revelations with Crowley's.

Disappointingly there is no obvious comparison between Crowley's Book of the Law and Spare's Earth Inferno – one the work of a writer, the other the work of an artist. The nearest thing to "The Book of the Law" written by Spare is the first part of his later Focus of Life. It consists of three chapters of aphorisms dictated by three different beings – Kia, Zos and Ikkah – which first appear in Earth Inferno, and it therefore demands comparison with "The Book of the Law" which also consists of three chapters dictated by three beings. As the last words from Kia are "I – infinite space" it is immediate to identify Kia with Nuit and to try to see parallels in the two texts.

The only obvious parallels are in Spare's second chapter which contains some pretty Thelemic utterances, such as:

"The mighty are righteous for their morals are arbitrary";
"Judge without mercy, all this weakness is thy self abuse";
"There is only one sin – suffering";
"... be surely what thou wilt" (an interesting comparison with "do what thou wilt");
"Fear nothing – strike at the highest" ... and so on.

The Focus of Life was, however, written after Spare had been in contact with Crowley, so these similarities may well be due to Spare knowing The Book of the Law; but remember that he had rejected Crowley, so any influence would not be slavish imitation but rather ideas chosen because they were in accord with his own vision.

The conclusion I'm suggesting is that one way to view Spare's magic is as his own interpretation of a new current which entered the group mind around 1904. He was seeing one facet of the whole; Crowley, Einstein, Jung, Fortune and probably many others were to pick up other facets of it. Each tried to explain what they saw: some like Crowley provided very full accounts, others like Einstein provided very detailed accounts of smaller parts of the whole. Spare was trying to give a full account, an entire philosophy of existence but did not communicate it very clearly. So we can understand his work better if we allow other people's ideas to cast light on it.

The first difference between Crowley and Spare that strikes me is that Spare's writing provides a simple, coherent theory where Crowley provides a detailed technology. It is possible to read Spare carefully and come up with the response "yes, but what are you supposed to DO?" – there is little practical instruction. Crowley, on the other hand, has provided an enormous corpus of ritual and other practices, more than any person could ever master in a lifetime, but there are times when one is hard to put to find one coherent theory behind all these practices – he went through his Golden Dawn phase, his Buddhist phase, his Thelemic phase and so on. By way of analogy you could

compare Spare's writing to Einstein's – it may be hard to understand, but behind it lays a very simple model of reality. To obtain great energy, according to Einstein, it is only necessary to split the atom; to obtain a desire, says Spare, it is only necessary to remove it to the unconscious, organic level and consciously forget it. But in practice the simple splitting of an atom requires a vast investment in technology; similarly, most people cannot follow Spare's simple instructions unless they have previously done a lot of self development along the lines of, say, Crowley's magical technology (there may be some with innate magical sense, but most of us are still adrift on a sea of beliefs and desires). So one approach to Spare is to use his world-view to help clear one's mind of a surfeit of gods, while actually practicing Thelemic techniques to strengthen one for Spare's magical methods.

I like the contrast between Crowley's "do what thou wilt" and Spare's "be what thou wilt" because it illustrates my feelings that Crowley and Spare represent, as it were, the yang and yin of the new aeon. Though Crowley recognises that existence is pure joy, his magic reflects the will to power where Spare's reflects the will to pleasure. There is much of taoism in Spare's writings. Paradoxically, however, although female forms abound in his art, "the feminine" plays little part in his apparently misogynist writings. It is the spirit of his ideas which is so yin – as if the Feminine was working at the unconscious level in Spare whereas the Masculine was driving Crowley's unconscious.

One example of the "yin" nature of Spare's system is his emphasis on the importance of forgetting. In his system you have a desire, you devise an apparently meaningless sigil to encapsulate that desire, you exhaust yourself in a frenzy of activity until the only object remaining in consciousness is the sigil, you hold on to it until it has become charged with "free belief", then you must do all you can subsequently to forget the original desire – for conscious desiring will impede the realisation of the sigil. This is the difficult bit. It is also rather puzzling because we find a big divide here in magical theory: those systems which emphasise the "not desiring" (eg Spare, taoism, zen) and those which advocate enflaming oneself with desire – as in Crowley's instructions for devotion to a deity, or as in the "self help" systems which demand a constant affirmation of one's objectives (I recall seeing an American lady doing Swedish drill while chanting "I MUST, I MUST, I MUST increase my BUST"). Both these extremes have a ring of truth, how can they be reconciled? It is not enough just to split the operation in two and say one needs to enflame oneself before it, and forget after – in traditional conjurations of the Holy Guardian Angel one goes on enflaming until success happens.

THE INNER AND THE OUTER

One possible explanation is that the distinction may reflect the difference between introversion and extroversion. The extrovert is positive to the outside world, and negative to the inner world. When the extrovert attempts "inner" work he finds it a crazy place like Alice's looking glass world – you have to metaphorically walk backwards in order to move forwards. The introvert is much more at home in his inner world, but is more likely to be perplexed by the outer world: here the introvert finds that he has so often to go backwards in order to move forward. The introvert feels desire as such a vivid tangible force – perhaps more tangible than the actual object of desire – that the

desire really does serve to block and render him impotent; thus the introvert is more often driven to using paradoxical methods in the outer world. This is in keeping with Eysenck's idea of the extrovert as someone who needs greater stimulation to be effective, while the introvert needs to avoid overstimulation. If an extrovert wants his record in the charts he should plug it like crazy, but if the introvert wants to do the same he would do better to try to get the record banned! If the extrovert wants to become successful he should hang up "I'm the greatest" posters and constantly affirm his desire, while the introvert would do better to blow his desire on a sigil and then try so hard to fail that he eventually becomes an underground cult figure. Thus it seems that the magic of taoism and Spare is magic for introverts, while the out and invocatory stuff is better suited to the extrovert.

This is, of course, a gross oversimplification: no-one is pure extrovert or introvert; we are a mixture and so need to blend our magics. But it does suggest a useful concept to experiment with, and a possible answer to the problem that magic so often fails when the operator is too personally involved: if you wish to practice magic in a situation which seems very extroverted and "other" (like healing an unknown person at a distance), then you would well to "enflame yourself with prayer". But if the matter is one which involves you very personally, then you would do better to follow Spare's approach. Or perhaps the introvert would use Spare's magic to operate on the outside world, and Crowley's magic for inner working; while the extrovert needs Crowley's magic for the outer and Spare's on the inner? In either case, of course, the long-term object is to grow out of this slavery of the concept of intro/extroversion and start living!

MAGIC AND THE MAN

Another interesting point is the distinction between the magic and the man. Anyone studying Spare's magic books would expect the writer to be a sort of ascetic Zen master: "simplicity I hold most precious." He advocates simplicity, asceticism: "Bed, a hard surface; clothes of camel hair; diet, sour milk and the roots of the earth. All morality and love of women should be ignored." He rants against ritual magicians and all their parade and paraphernalia, but later in life he painted an altar piece for Grant's Nuit Isis Lodge and was prepared to do work for Gerald Gardner as described in Grant's Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare.

One answer is that many years had passed since his books were written – the man had changed. Another is that perhaps Spare was primarily just a channel for his magical ideas: someone to whom they were revealed but who never succeeded in fully realising them. Perhaps he too had difficulty in practising what he preached, being a man ahead of his time? His final chapter of The Book of Pleasure contains these words: "I... am impervious in purity (of self-love) – but I dare not claim its service! I am in eternal want of realisation... An opinionist, I fear to advocate an argument, or compromise myself by believing my own doctrines as such..." and so on.

The Austin Spare described by Kenneth Grant in his Images and Oracles sounds much more like a tribal shaman than a Zen master. Some people have asked, "which is the true Spare?" Grant actually knew Spare in his later years, so it is reasonable to assume

that Spare was as he describes at that time, and we hear of Spare co-operating with ritual magicians, using such elaborations as an “earthenware virgin” for sex magic, and muttering incantations as part of his procedure – elements which play no part in the system as described in *The Book of Pleasure*.

So do we conclude that he was a changed man? That he had degenerated (or even advanced?) from the pure system he described to a form of shamanistic sorcery? Personally I prefer to accept Grant’s overall view of him as a master shaman, and believe that through his innate skills he obtained an early vision of a new system of magic, a magic for the coming age. Rather than debating as to which was the true Spare, we should therefore look to him as a prophet rather than a perfect practitioner of his own system, and we should instead concentrate on developing the technology of that system for ourselves and for future generations. Is this not basically what the new school of magic known as “chaos magic” is all about?

CONCLUSION

If 1904 was indeed a revolutionary year, it is reasonable to ask if there are any astrological phenomena to support this. The most obvious one to strike me is the entry of Uranus (planet of upheaval) into Capricorn (sign of structures).

Once before since its discovery Uranus had entered Capricorn, in about 1820. This was the year when Oersted demonstrated the link between electricity and magnetism – a revelation which was to have a profound effect on conventional ideas of physical reality.

Although I’m not aware of any great occult crisis at that time, James Webb (in *Flight from Reason*) did choose 1820 to mark the beginning of what he called “the Age of the Irrational”. I suspect that the new electromagnetic theories of the time inspired the “etheric” occult terminology of the last century, just as Einstein’s theories inspire the occultists of this century to talk of “other dimensions”. But if the entry of Uranus into Capricorn was less significant in 1820, could it mean we are looking at a minor cycle which had exaggerated impact in 1904 because of an impending Aquarian age, or the transition to Crowley’s “Aeon of Horus”?

Anyway, in late 1987 we are now at the end of the final or “twelfth house” phase of this Uranus in Capricorn cycle, making it a very suitable time for a major exhibition and re-evaluation of Spare’s work before Uranus enters Capricorn again next February.

Is the convention of the age once more reaching its limit? And will 1988 be as fruitful as 1904 was?

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* This refers to the commentaries included in the essay “Spare Parts”, a thorough introduction to the Sparean system of magic. This essay has been published in Uncle Ramsey’s *Bumper Book of Magick Spells*, and other essays on science and magic.

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The Bookplate Designs of Austin Osman Spare
by Robert Ansell

Illustrations first published in AOS Ex-Libris, Keridwen Press, 1988

Although the contemporary myth of a young AOS as the enfant terrible of Edwardian art society has ensured his subsequent notoriety; in truth Spare was keen to court and encourage the patronage of collectors he viewed as supportive to his cause.

Nowhere is this more evident than in his designs for “ex-libris” – the small ownership labels fixed into books to denote the library of origin. This peculiar art form appealed to AOS, combining his love of books with art. The small format forced him to focus his expressive energies in imaginative ways, as may be seen in his designs for Andre Raffalovich (1910) and Pickford Waller (1908). Here too may be seen some of his finest line work, reflected in his ex-libris for John Oswald (1909) and Sybil Waller (1909).

Although Spare’s best work in this field appears between 1907 and 1910 he returned to the genre after the publication of *The Focus of Life* in 1921. These later designs, largely for his loyal patron Pickford Waller, fall into a period of intense introspection for Spare. Gone is the fine detail and recurring classical motifs of earlier work and instead we are offered satyrs and self-portraits amid swirling forms. Thus AOS chronicled his descent towards the publication of *Anathema of Zos* in 1927; and the death of patrons Pickford Waller and Desmond Coke in the early 30s.

It would be nearly 20 years before Spare undertook his final bookplate design, for the journalist Dennis Bardens, but throughout his career AOS relished not only designing printed ex-libris, but also exquisite hand-drawn examples. These he continued to execute for friends and patrons until the end of his life, often embellishing the book with his own distinctive brand of decoration as a special bonus. These unique ex-libris are the rarest of all his forays into this field and are the ultimate acquisition for every collector.

This list first appeared in *AOS Ex-Libris* (Keridwen Press, 1988) and has been edited and augmented for inclusion in the Fulgur Limited website.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris by AOS, 1905. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1905

Robed figures on plinth with books and figures at their feet. 135 x 85mm. Monogram.

Printed in sepia.

Pickford Waller was Spare's most important patron, supporting him from his earliest days through until his death in 1930. This is the first design for Waller and contains some of the motifs that recur in Spare's work of the period: the slipped mask, the drama of curtained space, dragons, plinths and other classical references.

Desmond Coke Ex-Libris, 1907 Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

DESMOND COKE 1907

An array of objects befitting a collector, including silhouettes of the patron and artist. 157 x 98mm. Monogram.

Coke was a connoisseur and collector especially interested in silhouettes. His book *The Art of Silhouette* was published in 1913. He was a friend of Haldane MacFall and Claude Lovat Fraser, both contributors to Spare's journal *The Golden Hind*. Coke supported AOS until his death in Worthing in 1931.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris, c.1907. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER c.1907

Vine-tree with resident nymph bursting forth from root. 83 x 64mm. Monogram.

This design clearly shows the influence of Charles Ricketts, particularly his illustrations to Oscar Wilde's *The Sphinx* (Elkin Matthews and John Lane, 1894)

Ralph Straus Ex-libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

RALPH STRAUS 1908

A library interior with an ostrich standing in foreground. 95 x 63mm. Monogram.

Here Spare employs a visual pun, as "Straus" is German for "ostrich". Straus was an earlier chronicler of Spare's work and his article on AOS appeared in *The Booklover's Magazine* in 1909

AOS Ex-Libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

AUSTIN O. SPARE 1908

Apollo and Daphne embracing, a plinth with a self-portrait bust to the right. 101 x 67mm. Monogram.

Inspired by his illustrations to C. F. Grindrod's *Songs from the Classics* (David Nutt, 1907) this design shows the genesis of Spare's lifetime obsessions: the interplay of the sexes, the bestial satyr representing atavistic experience, the power and myth of ancient culture, particularly Greece, and the ubiquitous self-portrait.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1908

A circular design with a self-portrait seated, surrounded by figures. 107mm diameter. Monogram

Robert Boss Ex-Libris, 1908. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

M. ROBERT BOSS 1908

A miscellany of books, pictures and figures, a cow looking rather majestic as a centrepiece. 110 x 64mm. Monogram.

Here Spare employs another visual pun, as “Bos” is Latin for “cow”.

Elizabeth Murch Mitchell Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

E. MURCH MITCHELL 1909

A classical Greek figure holding a lyre. 101 x 47mm. Unsigned. Printed in red.

Elizabeth Murch Mitchell was one of Spare’s childhood sweethearts. This design is very similar to those Spare drew for C. F. Grindrod’s Songs from the Classics (David Nutt, 1907).

Cissie Spare Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

CISSIE A. SPARE 1909

As above. 101 x 47mm. Unsigned. Printed in green.

“Cissie” was the nickname given to Spare’s older sister, Susan Ann Spare.

AOS Bookplate, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE 1909

Self-portrait amid a sprouting “tree” of images, including Spare’s birth sign the Capricorn goat. 115 x 79mm. Monogram.

By 1909 Spare had two published works behind him and was developing towards The Book of Pleasure. Here his increasing confidence is evident. Rising from a sea of matter is an efflorescence of forms, including lizards, birds, flowers and a “botanical baby” – with a self-portrait central to the design. Here also may be found an early representation of the hand and eye motif.

John Oswald Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

JOHN OSWALD 1909

An Edwardian interior with a variety of sports equipment to the left. 119 x 77mm.

Monogram.

The connoisseur John Oswald lived in St. James' and doubtless would have attended Spare's shows at the Ryder Gallery around this time. A highly detailed design and one of the few etchings Spare executed.

Sybil Waller Ex-Libris, 1909. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

SYBIL WALLER 1909

A double-headed bird with flaming sceptre in background. 103 x 90mm. Monogram.

Pickford Waller's only daughter was a keen admirer of Spare during her father's lifetime. A friend of James Guthrie, author of the introduction to Spare's *The Book of Satyrs*, she later affirmed her classical leanings with a book of poems and essays entitled *The Kingdom of Pan* in 1952.

Andre Raffalovich Ex-libris, c1910. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

ANDRE RAFFALOVICH c1910

A columbine formed from birds and a mask. 121 x 64mm. Initialled. Printed in sepia.

Raffalovich, a "wealthy patron of the arts and letters" (Sewell, Footnote to the Nineties, p.1) invited Spare to his home in Edinburgh in 1910. Here Spare produced some memorable work, including an accomplished self-portrait that Canon Gray, Raffalovich's lifetime friend, gave as a bequest to the Victoria and Albert Museum. This bookplate design, with its inventive simplicity, is arguably Spare's finest contribution to the genre.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1912. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1912

A mallard evolving into a lily. 110 x 85mm. Signed with monogram.

Another zoomorphic design involving birds and flowers, a common theme of the period.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1921. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1921

A circular design of a reclining androgynous figure. 99mm diameter.

A woodcut by William Quick after A. O. Spare. Quick was responsible for engraving most of Spare's woodcut designs. Eyes cast downward, androgynous and vulnerable, the figure is a self-portrait, and compares curiously with his self-portrait frontispiece to *The Focus of Life* published in the same year. In this image Spare's face is obscured because his head is turned upward, whilst a strategically placed open book suggests sexual ambiguity.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1922. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1922

Self-portrait amidst flames. Original design 170 x 120min. Initialled.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1922. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1922

Swirling masses with elfin self-portrait in foreground. 150 x 102mm. Initialled. Printed in sepia.

Grace Rogers Ex-libris, 1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

GRACE E. ROGERS c1923

Nude with ram's head amid swirling forms. 141 x 102min. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 1 No. 4, July 1923.

Pickford Waller Ex-libris, 1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

PICKFORD WALLER 1923

Bust of Pan on column amid swirling forms. 145 x 103mm. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 1, No. 4, July 1923

George Mackay Ex-libris, c.1923. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

G. H. R. MACKEY c1923

Self-portrait. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 5, October 1923

Ellen V. Spare Ex-libris, 1924. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

ELLEN V. SPARE c1924

Head amidst twisted landscape. Possibly never printed. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 6, Jan. 1924

Ellen V. Spare was Spare's youngest sister. Born in 1894, she became a professional artist illustrating fashion magazines and lived in Essex. They remained close until Austin's death.

George Mitchell Ex-libris, c.1924. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

GEORGE J. MITCHELL c1924

Self-portrait within swirling masses. Possibly never printed. Initialled.

Reproduced in The Golden Hind, Vol. 2 No. 6, Jan. 1924

Dennis Bardens Ex-libris, 1945. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

DENNIS BARDENS 1945

Portrait of Barden's head, decapitated and resting on a book. 102 x 71mm. Initialled.

Dennis Bardens, a journalist, met Spare in the mid 1930s and they became close friends. He orchestrated Spare's 1938 show in the Walworth Road studio and contributed an introduction to the catalogue. This is only the second ex-libris to include a portrait of the patron, the first being for Desmond Coke in 1907. Bardens and Spare remained friends until Spare died in 1956.

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by Marcus M. Jungkurth

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Whilst much has been written about Austin Osman Spare, the artist and the magician, the psychological impact of his work seems to have attracted little attention so far. Leaving aside for the moment his fine art or his outstanding portraits with all their poetic strength, we will instead focus on Spare's symbolic and magically inspired drawings many of which have to be interpreted in the light of his written work. As modern depth psychology has shown, the human unconscious mind expresses itself in images, metaphors and symbols (1) rather than in words or contents of concrete meaning. Dreams, of course, are one example for the symbolic expressions of the unconscious we are all acquainted with and, according to modern models of the human psyche, they do not only occur during sleep but continue during daytime underneath the waking consciousness even though we are rarely aware of it. The psychologist and writer James Hillman has even gone further claiming that each individual appears to be re-living some archetypal drama from ancient mythologies prevailing as a main theme underlying individual life. These strata reside within the depths of our unconscious and formulate the continuous dream-state by re-enacting the respective mythological theme. Besides outer factors like individual experience, social interaction and education which constitute the human personality, consciousness as a whole thus embodies on a deeper level also one or more of the archetypal figures (2). Myths are thus far more than just

fairy-tales from mankind's remote past, they constitute a living reality in the life of modern man. Mythology is no doubt an important theme occurring over and over in Spare's work, and in the following we will try to analyse which archetypes seem to have had an especially strong impact on his life as an artist.

According to the model laid forth above, human consciousness is composed of a multitude of layers of simultaneous activity, the distinction between the conscious and the subconscious thus being a convenient but arbitrary mode of trying to draw a map of mind. Human consciousness is able to actively concentrate or focus on one level at a time only, which is why one is tempted to assume that all other planes are inactive in waking state, but actually we just shift our attention all the time. While walking on the street on the way home the dream, which we thought had ended when waking up, continues, while concentrating on the traffic, we listen to inner dialogs or recapitulate the day, and yet we perceive consciousness as a continuity by simply shifting the point of view as the need arises. Now some people, notably creative personalities and artists, have a natural affinity to also become aware of the other levels which for the most of us remain hidden, and thus it doesn't come as a surprise that Spare termed the unconscious "the storehouse of memories with an ever-open door". Especially artists by virtue of their ability to directly express their creativity through the unconscious often have access to those layers; besides the artist whose works this exhibition is showing, authors like H.P. Lovecraft or the contemporary artist H.R. Giger, to name but a few, spring to mind. The artist directly translates the raw material which is rising from his unconscious into form and image, drawings or paintings, or clothes it in poetry, prose or music. "All geniuses have active sub-consciousness, and the less they are aware of the fact, the greater their accomplishments. Know the subconsciousness to be an epitome of all experience and wisdom, past incarnations as men, animals, birds, vegetable life, etc. etc., everything that exists, has and ever will exist" (4).

What separates nocturnal dream-sleep from an actual direct experience of the unconscious layers of mind is a very thin borderline only, and the crossing of this line has been aptly described as 'the journey to Hades' (3). As we know from classical mythology, the intervention of Hades invariably turns the world upside down; now phenomena are seen not only through the eyes of Eros and human life and love, but also through Thanatos: "Entering the underworld" refers to a transition from the material to the psychical point of view. Three dimensions become two as the perspective of nature, flesh and matter fall away, leaving an existence of immaterial, mirrorlike images, eidola ...the Greek word Eidolon signifying an image (2). Spare described the state when consciousness has crossed this fine line as Neither-Neither or Inbetween, "not this – nor that", out of which most notably his automatic drawings rose: "...the 'Neither-Neither' principle of those two, is the state where the mind has gone beyond conception ...The 'I' principle has reached the 'Does not matter – need not be' state, and it is not related to form. Save and beyond it, there is no other, therefore it alone is complete and eternal (4). The key to reaching this state is the attainment of a "total vacuity" of the conscious mind which concept is also an important part of Eastern religion such as the Buddhist path to enlightenment or Yoga and Tantra exercise. Spare seems to have been intuitively aware about the inherent dangers of his method, as he

wrote total vacuity “is difficult and unsafe for those governed by morality, complexes” in which case an inflation of the unconscious followed by obsession is likely to occur. Spare’s goal was to explore the strata of the un-conscious, the underworld, in a reverse evolutionary order in order to transcend the laws of cause and effect, thus to attain an absolutely pure and unadulterated state in which reality appears as truth as opposed to conception: “The law of Evolution is retrogression of function governing progression of attainment, i.e., the more wonderful our attainments, the lower in the scale of life the function that governs them.” This retrogression was to reactivate the sentient atavisms of evolution still present in man, examples of which can again be seen in many of Spare’s automatic drawings. Whilst this approach may seem to be directly opposed to the common idea that evolution consists of diversification and of structures getting increasingly complex, Spare’s idea in some sense still fits many religious conceptions as, e.g., the Buddhist goal of reaching nirvana, nothing, by reducing the ‘false’ views and conscious constituents of mind gradually until nothing but absolute silence remains. Whether or not Spare succeeded in this respect, we will not attempt to judge in this place, but one of the apparent dangers of this special and highly original method Spare employed consists of the risk of becoming obsessed by whatever contents arise from the deepest levels of the unconscious or, to express it in more occult terms, fall prey to the spirits evoked in the accompanying states of trance. As Spare’s “Note on the difference of Magical Obsession (Genius) and Insanity” (4) shows, he was well aware of this danger and therefore chose to consciously evoke magical obsession by using certain symbols or sigils which served as gateways to direct him to the unconscious levels he wished to explore. His systematic approach to categorise the strata experienced led to the development of his “Alphabet of Desire” with each letter, itself composing a symbolic representation of an archetypal and primordial state, representing a well-defined original principle with a strong emphasis on sexuality: “Twenty-two in number, they correspond to a first cause. Each analogous to an idea of desire, and are a symbolic cosmogony. ... By knowledge of the first letter, one is familiar with the whole alphabet, and the thousands they imply. They are the knowledge of desire” (4).

Not only in Spare’s automatic drawings, but also in his other work archetypal and mythological motives prevail. Already in Spare’s rather early book *Earth Inferno* (5), we find the puzzling statement “Death is All”, and as “Zos vel Thanatos” – one of his mottoes and title of his creed which so far remained unpublished – he identified himself with Thanatos, Death, which was also one of the bynames of the Greek underworld god Hades. As in the famous mythological motif of Hades’ abduction and rape of Persephone which, as we have to remember, is not just psychopathy but a central initiatory mystery in the Eleusis myths, the archetype of Hades bears an intrinsic erotic component whilst, as indicated above, it is at the same time turning matters upside down. No wonder, then, that also in Spare’s interior worlds Thanatos merges with Eros, the spirit and principle of life, who however in this context is to be regarded the brother of death and not the principle that will save us from it (3). Eros as an archetype also bears distinct female qualities relating him to the anima principle, both referring to the reflexive instinct which Jung associated with the basis of consciousness, and so he defined her as the archetype of life itself, as the personification which unconsciously

involves us with larger collectivities of both inner and outer worlds (11). In this sense we can speak of the anima as the projection – making actor, the Shakti and the Maya that gives life to a person and in the artist serves as his muse. The concepts of death and sexuality are thus intimately interwoven which explains why in ancient mythology many of the early Goddesses like the Phoenician Astarte or even Aphrodite in Sparta and on Cyprus were both Goddesses of Love as well as of War and Death; many other examples can be found in Egypt, Mexico and Mesopotamia.

Spare's night-journey to the Witches' Sabbath led him to encounters not only with satyrs, ancient creatures and demons, but most notably with the dark side of the Great Mother, reminding us of the hero's travels through the Gates of Night as found in the myth of Ishthar, the Egyptian Book of the Dead or in Apuleius' famous description of the initiation into the mysteries of Isis. The symbolic reality of the terrifying female draws its images mainly from the interior world, the negative elementary character of the female expresses itself in fantastic and chimerical images which do not originate in the outside world. Thus it becomes evident that the terrifying or monstrous female is a symbol of the unconscious itself. As Erich Neumann (5) has shown, the experience of the negative or evil side of the anima is part of the mystery of inner transformation by the annihilation of the male or patriarchal consciousness and the subsequent reincarnation out of the female womb. Again the motif of reduction or regression shines through, here by reaching back-wards to the cellular level of the very beginning of life itself. A destruction of traditional values occurs during this process, the ideals of beauty and harmony which are too often but a by-product of society's current tastes, are turned upside down in order to release the anima or female within: "The desertion of the 'Universal Woman' lying barren on the parapet of the Subconscious in humanity; and humanity sinking into the pit of conventionality. Hail! The convention of the age is nearing its limit, and with it a resurrection of the Primitive Woman". (6) His identification of the "Universal Woman" – the mediatrix of the unknown acting as psychopompos – with the element of Earth underlines the dark aspect of his anima, her relation to death, decay and age, as the caverns of earth even in ancient times were both temples of initiation and tombs: the Great Mother taking all back into her what had originally emerged of her. Spare's encounters with his "Universal Woman", the luring quintessence of desire, with whom he "strayed into the path direct", led to the formulation of 'The new sexuality of ZOS', a sexuality not being limited to mere sensuality, but defined as pure cosmic consciousness embracing reality, freed from all convention and condition. For Spare, this woman, of whom actual woman was but an incomplete and distorted image, symbolized "all otherness", and to unite with her would lead to the realization and attainment of the Self. The anima's male counterpart, the animus, however remains strangely vague in Spare's work, he shows in zoomorphic forms or is reduced to partial representations as head or phallus. Whilst the androgynous figure, the divine hermaphrodite, as a symbol of the hieros gamos, the sacred marriage and reconciliation of the opposites, is an occasional motif in his drawings, it appears as idealized vision, cloudy and distant in its expression, as if not yet fully realized. One has the impression that especially during his later years, Spare embraced the left side of existence under the exclusion of the other half of reality, the whole of which he was no doubt longing for. Also his increasing withdrawal from the outer world can be understood as a sign of

denial which often follows a one-sided identification with the interior worlds, the anima as the guiding spirit being responsible for depersonalisation, as it is her who provides the relationship between man and the world; depersonalisation must be distinguished from depression in this context, as it is less an inhibition of vital functions and the narrowness of focus than it is a loss of personal involvement with and attachment to self and world (10). Naturally one wonders whether this form of imbalance is not that which exactly constitutes the great artist, whether the resulting inner strain is not a prerequisite and driving force for artistic creativity. The creative genius rarely is a well-balanced individual as the biographies of countless renowned artists of the past clearly show.

Austin Osman Spare has left to us not only his extraordinary artwork which certainly makes him one of the most remarkable painters of his time, but also an interesting method and practical approach of gaining access to the unconscious. As, again, the unconscious ex-presses itself in symbolic ways only, art provides excellent means to enable us to enter communication with it. Besides other, more mental techniques like the active imagination, C.G. Jung also recommended to work with drawings or paintings as a means to get access to and express the archetypal contents of the psyche. Interestingly it does not matter whether the individual has artistic inclinations or not; to the contrary, the present author has found that the art created by the unconscious more often than not shows abilities and even technical skills the individual would not be capable to exhibit in the ordinary conscious state of mind. Spare developed a special technique which he called the 'Death Posture'-a drawing of the same title is the frontispiece of his Book of Pleasure (4) – which he defined as “a simulation of death by the utter negation of thought” and which was to reactivate the deeply buried unconscious memories (9). In less uncanny terms the whole process can be roughly summarised as a silencing and drawing-in of the senses in order to become 'empty', a 'vacuity', so that all mental processes come to a halt. In nature any vacuum will not exist for long, *natura abhorret a vacuo*, as soon as the chance arises, it will fill itself; the vacuum within being attained, the archetypal contents are automatically drawn up, any conscious effort neither being necessary nor desired in order to avoid any censoring by the values of the conscious mind. The actual process Spare himself used to pass through when working with the Death Posture can easily be adapted according to individual needs and skills. For reaching a vacuity in the mind, a variety of Yoga exercises or meditations can be employed which we have already described elsewhere (7). A work-space with paper or cardboard, pencils, coal or ink is to be prepared beforehand; oil-based paints and the like should be avoided, as the contents usually arise quite sudden, and there will be no time for detailed and refined elaboration. As the reader will have noted, Spare's automatic workings are coal and pencil drawings or have only later been worked out. The inner vacuity once being reached, the unconscious will immediately respond and express itself. You just have to wait and start to draw as soon as any image arises. Part of the present author's personal work was to investigate and represent archetypal contents by means of art, and one of the most remarkable outcomes was that the artwork produced in the state of being “inbetween” opened a direct pathway to archetypes which could be made conscious also beyond the trance. Faces out of dreams, of the past long forgotten, the countenances of the inner male and female, ancient deities rose out of the trance, thus building a bridge between

the underworld and upperworld uniting that which has been “divided for love’s sake, for the chance of union” (8). The recommendation to put this method into practice, very often yields a ‘I couldn’t do this, I have no talent’ as a reply – this is far from being true. We firmly believe that the artist is buried in each and every one of us, it is only matter of trustfully daring: “The soul has no language, levels or values, except its own, but it answers to all affectiveness” (9).

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'Memories of a sorcerer': notes on Gilles Deleuze-Felix Guattari, Austin Osman Spare and Anomalous Sorceries

by Matt Lee, University of Sussex

My aim here is to introduce the philosophers Deleuze-Guattari to readers perhaps unfamiliar with their work and indicate something curious about their work, which is that it appears to have some sort of relation in a practical sense to the concept of the sorcerer. Whilst not a central figure in Deleuze and Guattari's work, the sorcerer and the witch are themes that do crop up in their texts more often than might be expected and play more than a simply 'metaphorical' role. I think that Deleuze and Guattari can provide a resource for those interested in sorcery, magic and witchcraft in two ways: firstly they can provide theoretical tools which can challenge or at least complement structuralist, constructivist and historicist accounts and so can be of use to researchers attempting to understand these phenomena; secondly, they can provide a theoretical resource for those within the magical community who at times attempt to theorise their practise with what are essentially philosophical concepts.

Gilles Deleuze

Series, structure and anomaly

Gilles Deleuze died in 1995, committing suicide through defenestration after having endured considerable physical difficulty with breathing. He was part of the French post-structuralist movement that consists of figures such as Lyotard, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. He was always, however, a slightly oblique figure, never quite following the same lines of thought as his contemporaries. Like all the post-structuralists, he shared a concern with Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche but unlike his contemporaries Deleuze took his inspiration not only from Nietzsche but also from Hume, Spinoza and Bergson as well as numerous people 'outside' philosophy such as Gregory Bateson.

One of the driving forces of the 'post-structuralist' movement in philosophy was a 'theoretical anti-humanism'. This anti-humanism placed itself in opposition to any thought that centred on Man as the primary analytical category. Deleuze's particular contribution focussed on developing concepts of 'immanence' and 'difference' which put forward a univocal ontology - that is, which put forward a unified being, a thought of life that has no 'outside' or 'duality' but which contains within itself its own means of development. This univocal universe is full of flux and becoming, a constantly shifting ocean of change. The role of Bergson in Deleuze's thought is to give him the means to make this 'univocal ontology' move and evolve; the ideas of a vitalism which can be found within Bergson's *Creative Evolution*, for example, play a critical role for Deleuze because they provide an organic model of the universe that corresponds to the philosophical ontology. John Marks has also noted that in Deleuze's work, "vitalism is a way of connecting with, of being in the presence of, this pre-individual world of flux and becoming" and thus vitalism forms a way of both modelling the universe as a universe of becoming that allows the creation of a way of thinking that enables us to understand this constant flux.

Vitalism is still, as it were, a model. It is an interpretation or account and there is then the problem of what a concrete vitalism of thought and life would mean. To this end Deleuze uses a concept of 'desire' as the name for the flow, which includes the flow through us. Desire, crucially, is not a desire for anything that is lacking, as in both Freud, Hegel and Lacan. Desire is a constituting activity of becoming, it is the individual current within the oceanic mass. In this essay, looking specifically at the practices of the sorcerer and their becomings, the streams of desire are something that the sorcerer will 'plug into'. "Becoming begins as a desire to escape bodily limitation" according to Brian Massumi and whilst this does not characterise all becoming it points to the practices of the sorcerer with which this essay is concerned.

Having sketched out the twin concepts of vitalism and desire in terms of their role within this essay I want to now turn to one of Deleuze's late works, written alongside the radical 'anti-psychiatrist' Felix Guattari, in order to explore becoming in more detail. Early in the seventies, Deleuze and Guattari had begun work on a two part work called 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', the first part of which was *Anti-Oedipus*, where the

concept of desire is most apparent. The second part of 'Capitalism and Schizophrenia', not published until the eighties, was called A Thousand Plateaus. I want to discuss 3 subsections of the tenth chapter of A Thousand Plateaus that go under the heading, 'memories of a sorcerer'. I will first sketch a little of their context.

The three sections come within a chapter titled "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible" which consists of 14 subsections, the first twelve of which are subtitled 'memories of' something. The chapter begins with a discussion that quickly leads to a distinction between series and structure. This distinction is between two different forms of analogy. Analogy is divided between analogy of proportion and analogy of proportionality, the first being the analogy of the series and the latter that of the structure. The analogy of proportion is of the form 'a resembles b, b resembles c,' and as such posits a first term from which resemblance originates, "a single eminent term, perfection or quality as the principle behind the series". The analogy of proportionality is of the form 'a is to b as c is to d'. In this form of analogy there is no single series but rather a set of differences distributed across structures. The structure of 'a to b' and the structure 'c to d' and it is the differences between the elements that form the basis of an analogy. Whilst this may seem an obscure philosophical distinction it in fact represents two radically different forms of mapping the world. The first analogical structure of the series is assigned, as an example, to Jung and the notion of archetypes as analogical representations. In contrast with Jung the next figure in the text is Levi-Strauss, whose analysis of totemism brings forward, according to Deleuze and Guattari, a system of internal homologies rather than external resemblances. What fundamentally shifts when employing one form of analogy or another is the emphasis in the analysis and understanding of the forms under observation. In the former case we attempt to observe relations of identification or identity between terms, whether a resembles b and perhaps, through a series of steps, whether we can connect a to z. In the case of the structural approach we examine not the terms in themselves but rather the relations between terms. It is precisely this method that we would employ if we were to approach the translation of a symbolic system we thought of as an unknown language. The alphabetical series of a language would be constructed through discovery of internal homologies, which would begin to assign positions within the system to the elements based upon the existing knowledge of known languages.

These two systems, of series and structure, offer modes of becoming. To understand this, first think of the distinction between a difference in kind and a difference of degree. A difference in kind poses a break between the differentiated elements, forming different sorts of things. A difference in degree poses a difference between elements within a kind, measurable according to a unified criterion. There are, for example, differences of degree between temperatures but differences in kind between temperatures and pressures even though these two structures can be brought into formulaic relation under the laws of physics. The first system we are looking at then, of a series based upon resemblance, offers a basic ontology of continuity, with differences organised according to degree; whereas the second system, of structural relations, posits a pluralistic or regional ontology with differences of kind, in particular between 'Man and Animal'. In

passing, however, we can note two ways in which these analogies might organise an understanding of magic. In terms of a series, whose pre-eminent term might be rational control of nature or something along those lines, we could argue that magic resembles science in its attempts to establish control or understanding of nature. Its resemblance is such that magic might be said to be 'lower' in form than science but might be assimilated into the history of science as a pre-cursor in a process aiming at the same goal. It would thus be brought within a 'historical series' that posited a particular goal or end point to progress. Alternatively we might say that magic plays a structurally identical role to science within a particular society, operating as a sort of technology that we understand as different from, but again assimilable to, our own culture. The first account would be one of series, the second one an account of structures.

Deleuze and Guattari, however, suggest that the two forms of structure and series both ignore or reject something fundamental which can be named as the anomalous. In particular, whilst these two forms of understanding may well prove useful, Deleuze and Guattari asks whether "there is still room for something else, something more secret, more subterranean: the sorcerer and becomings (expressed in tales instead of myths or rites)?" The sorcerer is introduced at this point as the figure of the anomaly. This can be perceived as simply a metaphorical use of the term 'sorcerer' and whilst a metaphorical use is indeed part of what is going on, 'metaphor' is a poor word to describe what Deleuze and Guattari are doing. Their method is to use 'conceptual personae' to express concepts, figures through which a philosophical concept is described and 'diagrammed'. The sorcerer is central to their thought as just such a conceptual persona.

The figure of the sorcerer is introduced alongside what are called 'blocks of becoming', which are these anomalous events indicated by the date in the title of the chapter, 1730. "From 1730 to 1735, all we hear about are vampires". This is an example for Deleuze and Guattari of the blocks of becomings. These blocks of becomings are not fixed points from which something becomes something else - this is the central aspect of their argument. The blocks of becomings in this particular instance are what Deleuze and Guattari will call 'becoming-animal'.

The role of the animal within shamanic practice and as an aspect of the sorcerers art is indisputable in its existence if not in its exact function. Brian Bates, in his attempt to reconstruct an 'indigenous' neo-shamanic practice of the British Isles cites an example of 'animal workings'. He first suggests, using the divinatory role of the crow as an example, that there was a central role for animals within the world view of the Anglo-Saxon world of the first millennium and from which he is drawing his inspiration. After a brief 'universalist' move in which he suggests other more contemporary indigenous cultures also have a clear role for animals with shamanic practice, he then suggests that there is an inherent alienation in the way in which we have divorced ourselves from animals and asks how we might work to "re-establish a degree of connection, identification, respect and even a sense of the sacred presence of animals". Bates is not unaware of the problem of 'pretence' in any attempt to work with 'finding a power animal', that is, establishing some sort of sacred or magical-shamanic link with

an animal. As he says, “done superficially it simply confirms our casual attitude towards the animal world, and our propensity to use animals like a psychological fast-food dispenser: instant guardian animal”. What Bates carries out is a six month long program of meditation, imaginal activity, visualisation and practical association. The critical climax of Bates’ account comes when he describes a session in which a participant is associating with a bear. She is engaged in what Deleuze and Guattari call a ‘becoming’, in this instance a ‘becoming-bear’. Bates says, “when she walked into the room, on all fours, and then sat back on her haunches, she was a bear - her ‘performance’ transcended mimicry; it was much more than the sum of its parts”.

Bates’ account, makes a claim to a transcendence of mimicry. This opens up the problem of the ‘reality’ of the situation as well as the problem of our belief in this reality. Was she really, in any sense, a bear? The issue of belief and truth is still embedded within studies of shamanism and to a large extent is always posed when looking at magical practice rather than the history or theory of magical texts. Alan T. Campbell draws on a distinction from the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre when approaching this issue. MacIntyre, he says, distinguishes between understanding and belief, “making the point that an effort of understanding has inevitably to be made from the outside. If you’re already a ‘believer’ there’s no ‘understanding’ effort required. It’s because we don’t believe that we have to make the interpretative effort”. MacIntyre’s distinction is made in the context of Christian religion and in the tradition of ‘rational theology’ but it echoes a sceptical problem articulated very simply in a distinction drawn by Wittgenstein: “The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty”. The whole game of questioning reality, if taken as a game of doubting, puts the issue of belief in the foreground. This is the sceptical cul-de-sac. To begin from a position in which disbelief in the phenomena prompts an attempt to understand it is to engage in a form of delusion itself, to cover over our own presuppositions contained in the worldview within which we are inevitably - always, already - situated. Issues of belief and the reality of the phenomena will rapidly fall into the dichotomy of the believer/understander, the insider/outside. We will find ourselves in an endless ramified series of questions about whether it is real, whether it be spirits, magic or the sorcerers practice itself. These are, in many ways, false problems.

The task is not to question whether what is happening is real, is out there, a ‘fact’ or objective thing, but to pursue further the question of ‘what is happening’. The serial/structural models might aid in one way in cultural and historical analysis, but I have already suggested that Deleuze and Guattari argue that these will avoid the anomalous, precisely those events which seem the most ‘unreal’. It is as a ‘strategy of understanding’ that the notion of a block of becoming might prove useful. The analysis of these blocks of becoming, as they pose them, have no beginning point or end point and thus no substantive realities or objects whose reality status needs assigning. It the wrong question to ask whether the woman is in fact a bear, since this simply confuses the block of becoming, in this case a becoming-bear, with the reality or object that we might call ‘bear’ within a different context. “Becoming is never imitating”.

Blocks of becoming and the role of the pack

The blocks of becoming produce no end result. We do not engage in a becoming-animal in order to end up as an animal, even temporarily, or in the imagination, or on a spiritual level. The blocks of becoming produce nothing other than themselves, neither belonging to a subject (I become) nor ending in an object (a bear). This is the first claim; "Becoming produces nothing other than itself". What then are these blocks of becoming? They are processes and activities, but they are not of the imagination, nor are they phantasies, rather they are real in themselves, "perfectly real". It is not a question of imitation because this simply avoids the matter of the becoming itself. We must stay with the phenomena and not assume its reality somehow depends on anything outside itself, either a subject or a term. This is the second claim, "the principle according to which there is a reality specific to becoming". Finally, becomings do not operate through 'filiation', that is, they cannot claim some sort of serial link to an object or image which they resemble either more or less. Rather there is another process that is in play, a process of alliance. It is not a matter of "establishing corresponding relations" such as the macrocosm-microcosm model, but is carried out by a form of folding activity, in which connections, networks of involvement and intertwining are the methods in an activity that is not an evolution but rather what Deleuze calls an involution: "Becoming is involutionary, involution is creative". Three claims are evident then; (1) becomings produce only themselves, (2) becomings are perfectly real and (3) becoming is an involutionary and thus creative process.

This is the background to the three sections of the tenth chapter of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the rough outline of the route up to the 'Memories of a Sorcerer' sub-sections and I want to now look at the figure of the sorcerer within these sub-sections. Certain aspects of the text will have to be passed over, notably certain particular formulations that would involve me in a far too slow and detailed reading taking me beyond the subject of this essay. One of these tropes or formations within the text is worth noting, however, and that is the way in which they identify with the sorcerer. They use the phrase 'we sorcerers' in critical places within the text; in the first 'memory', where they identify a type of knowledge, in the second memory where they deal with a contradiction and in the third 'memory' where they identify a particular practice or method. They also use the phrase 'fellow sorcerers' in the first memory when describing their 'way'. It is worth bearing these identifications in mind in the following account of the argument within the sections under question.

We begin, we sorcerers, with the pack, Deleuze and Guattari argue. "A becoming-animal always involves a pack, a band, a peopling, in short, a multiplicity". This is one of the first principles of much of their thought, this notion of a multiplicity, which differs from a multiple in that a multiplicity is singular and not composed of simply numerable elements. A multiplicity is, albeit slightly simplistically, a whole greater than its parts. This must be understood quite literally, in the sense of packs, swarms, shoals and mobs or crowds where an animal might be said to take on a different form from the more common model of the individual particular; the specific animal is, in this sense, transcended or gone beyond when in a pack mode. Crucially the pack is not some sort of stage within an evolution, which is why I specifically mentioned crowds and mobs. For Deleuze and Guattari "every animal is fundamentally a band, a pack". The

distinction that is being motivated is in terms of understanding animals in terms of modes of multiplicity not simply characteristics of the multiple. It is in terms of these modes that we encounter the animal.

At this point the argument draws on an example from H.P. Lovecraft and his story of Randolph Carter in *Through the gates of the silver key*. Deleuze and Guattari, calling this one of Lovecraft's masterpieces, recount a passage from section 4 of the story, where a multiplicity of Randolph Carters' come pouring forth. Just before the passage quoted we find Lovecraft describing Randolph Carter's realisation as he passes through the 'Ultimate Gate'. "Now, beyond the Ultimate Gateway, he realised in a moment of consuming fright that he was not one person, but many persons". This passage, pointing explicitly to a notion of a multiplicity of selves, which would be understood as a mode of the human animal, reveals something of the role of the becoming-animal within Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy. The ability to access this mode of multiplicity is what is meant by sorcery.

What we see throughout *A Thousand Plateaus* is this entanglement between philosophical arguments and examples from fiction. Deleuze and Guattari draw heavily upon literature as a resource for their work. Is the sorcerer, then, simply another name for the writer? "If the writer is a sorcerer, it is because writing is a becoming". Yet the becomings are not a becoming something specific; they are not, for example, a becoming-writer. It is, rather, that the writers Deleuze and Guattari draw upon work with the method of becoming that belongs pre-eminently to the figure of the sorcerer. In particular the writer and the sorcerer, the writer as sorcerer, work with "feelings of an unknown Nature", called affects. This affect is a positive created force, a power that derives directly from the pack, from the mode of the animal as pack and which brings forth the multiplicity that will throw "the self into upheaval and make it reel".

The first memory sub-section focuses, then, on the pack and the multiplicity. One danger might be to think this pack in terms of tribe or filial community and associated with the notion of pack goes a second characteristic or 'principle'. "A multiplicity without the unity of an ancestor? It is quite simple; everybody knows it, but it is discussed only in secret. We oppose epidemic to filiation, contagion to heredity". The object at this point is to try and establish certain principles of method and understanding and to break down or pose alternatives to ideas of series and structure, of lineages. The pack, as multiplicity, works on a level of multiplicities, whereby it spreads through contagion. These two principles form, for Deleuze and Guattari, the path that any becoming-animal will take. A counter-principle is next put forward or rather a counter-point, where each multiplicity will express the 'exceptional individual'. This will be the anomaly.

Whilst every animal has a mode as pack and packs propagate through contagion, each pack will also contain its anomaly or anomalous point. Deleuze and Guattari are explicit in that this seems to pose a contradiction to the model they are putting forward of the process of becoming. If we begin from multiplicities then how can we logically reach a concept of the 'exceptional individual'? It is a contradiction to put forward both the multiplicity and the exceptional individual. "We sorcerers know quite well that the

contradictions are real but that real contradictions are not just for laughs". What is meant by the anomalous? It is first pointed to by again bringing in Lovecraft and his 'Outsider' or Thing, "teeming, seething, swelling, foaming, spreading like an infectious disease, this nameless horror". The exceptional individual is in fact not a specific, singular individual; Deleuze and Guattari explicitly proffer the term 'individual' only to retract it as they develop their concept, putting forward the idea that this 'individual' is in fact the focus of the affects they earlier brought into the discussion. This is why Lovecraft provides such a perfect example of description in that the Thing, the nameless horror, whilst individuated and specifiable to a degree is not in any sense an 'individual' with a sense of continuous self, nor even a physically specific identity.

The anomalous accompanies each multiplicity and this anomalous is in fact nothing other than the "phenomenon of bordering". The anomalous is the specific point at which the pack is divided along a line, where an edge is seen. The difficulty with this concept is that it includes both the situation of an alpha individual within a wolf pack and the situation of mosquitoes in their swarm. There are, it is clear, very different forms of this anomalous individual. It may be a specific animal that divides the pack into left and right, and the alpha wolf, with the pack streaming to the sides in something resembling a flight formation, is a strong image that might be drawn on in this situation. We would see the same thing again in the swarming rats, flowing over the banks and ditches of a woodland and James Herbert's stories of The Rats always feature some sort of over-large, over-intelligent or over-vicious individual that has taken the swarm into a new place, transforming them into a murderous beast of many forms. Within the mosquito swarm, and perhaps the same with flocking birds, the position of the anomalous individual is constantly shifting and the specific individuals flow through this role of the anomalous individual in turn as they become the edge of the whole. It is worth noting that there is no real hint of a leadership within this anomaly and at the point at which the anomalous is assigned to a position of hierarchy, as is the danger in the example of the wolf alpha structure, we find the concept of the pack being transformed again into the state. It is this curiously difficult distinction in collectivities that Deleuze and Guattari are aiming at. The pack may become the state, the family, the group but in itself is more than these more rigid structures; the pack is a mobile multiplicity, spreading through contagion and with a border formed through anomaly.

"The relation with the anomalous is one of alliance. The sorcerer has a relation of alliance with the demon as the power of the anomalous". At this point Deleuze and Guattari are attempting to locate the sorcerer within this conceptual structure of multiplicities within which there is a clear and rather privileged place for the sorcerer. This world consists of multiplicities, what are called at other times aggregates, which might be visualised as crowds, mobs, swarms or packs. There are many of these, at every level, from the cellular to the stellar, forming a vision of an interlocking, chaotic soup of multiplicities. The primary form of 'communication' and change or exchange between these multiplicities is via contagion, through infection or transformation or the one multiplicity by the other, across borderlines. These borderlines form a continuously changing series of edges, which trace out lines of rapid communication from one area to another and it is in these borderlines that we find the sorcerer and where one must go to

become a sorcerer. The borderlines are the constant critical areas of becoming. The reason for alliance is that the borderline poses a need to be at once on both sides. To even know that the edge exists it is necessary to have stepped over but in such a way that it is not simply forgotten. Moving from one aggregate to another, whilst it may involve a border crossing, will never produce awareness of the border except as a memory, almost a necessary memory. The alliance provides the means by which the sorcerer is capable of living at the border, since it enables a relation with both sides that enables the border to actually exist as a becoming that is no longer reduced to its terms, to either one side or the other, one thing or another.

This analysis of the sorcerous sections of Deleuze and Guattari's work needs one final addition before moving on. The overall structure of the analysis Deleuze and Guattari give is one that wants to retain the reality peculiar to becomings. These realities are what Deleuze and Guattari call the blocks of becoming. These blocks of becoming are multiplicities within wider structures of borderline or liminal contagion. The blocks of becoming have no 'beginning' or 'end' point but their dynamics are, however, capable of being further understood as being between the molecular and the molar. These are not opposites within a single structure but differences in kind. As John Marks says, "the distinction between the molar and the molecular is not a distinction of scale; it is qualitative rather than quantitative". The molar is the level of the organised, where we might find the state, whereas the molecular is the realm of desires' flux and flows. The tension touched upon above, where the pack might become the state, is precisely what happens when the pack becomes molar, organised and static, in effect ceasing to be a pack. The multiplicity of the pack is a molecular multiplicity.

Deleuze and Guattari do not provide simple models for analysis. What they do provide is a concerted attempt to bring forward working models for a mobile philosophy, a philosophy of becoming. As such they provide a huge resource for the study of phenomena of change and transformation, such as the study of liminal phenomena, of which sorcery and shamanism are key examples. They attempt to provide a systematic way in which we might study such phenomena, although the systems they attempt to establish are open systems. Deleuze argues in an earlier collection of interviews "a system's a set of concepts. And it's an open system when the concepts relate to circumstances rather than essences".

The anomalous becomings of sigils

The concept of becomings, including becoming-animal, is only one concept amongst the open system of Deleuze and Guattari's work. Another fundamental concept, motivated primarily by Deleuze, is the emphasis on a fully affirmative philosophy, one that breaks with the dialectic of Hegelian philosophy, the central tool of which is the power of negation. This philosophy of the affirmative that Deleuze and Guattari push forward might, with minor reservations, be said to be a Dionysian-Ariadnean philosophy. From this point connections with a sorcerer such as Spare can be traced out, starting from the "point of transmutation or transvaluation" that is central to this Nietzschean inspired affirmation of affirmation. One possible way of thinking this connection is of two different dynamics coalescing around this point of transmutation, one inspired by theory

(the philosopher), the other by practice (the sorcerer).

Having given a brief and theoretical account of an element of the work of Deleuze and Guattari I want then to turn to a specific example of magical practice in the form of the work of Austin Osman Spare. Spare has become increasingly well known over the last few years because of his association with a form of sorcery that is known as 'chaos magic'. Spare came into the occult scene at the turn of the twentieth century, publishing his first book of text and illustrations, *Earth Inferno*, in 1905. He is reported to have briefly become a member of Aleister Crowley's magical order, the *Argentum Astrum* (A.A.). Apparently Crowley made the comment "Artist: can't understand organisation" with regard to Spare, perhaps indicating a temperament unsuitable to the structures of the A.A. Spare's own comments on ceremonial magicians within *The Book of Pleasure* betray a little more hostility to the ceremonial magics of Crowleyian and Golden Dawn traditions however: "Others praise ceremonial magic, and are supposed to suffer much ecstasy! Our asylums are crowded, the stage is overrun! Is it by symbolising we become the symbolised? Were I to crown myself King, should I be King? Rather should I become an object of disgust and pity. These Magicians, whose insincerity is their safety, are but the unemployed dandies of the Brothels".

The Book of Pleasure is perhaps Spares' principal work and what is interesting in the comment above, aside from the obvious hostility to a particular form of magic, is the no less obvious methodological objection to the role of symbol and symbolisation within magic. It is important to distinguish very clearly Spare's form of sigilisation from any traditional notion of symbolism. There are a number of models that can be distinguished: a symbol can stand for something; it can point to something; it can contain something or it can communicate something. In each situation the symbol is essentially an adjunct of 'something', which we might describe as its' meaning. In essence the symbol is not the meaning but rather has a meaning and the basic structure is one of being a medium or container for this essential, non-symbolic reality. William Gray, for example, asks after the nature of a symbol and says, "in effect it is the good old 'outward sign of inward grace', or a practical link between objective and subjective existence. It is a body containing a soul, matter holding a meaning, a focus of force, a condenser of consciousness or a 'thought-tank'." To a large extent, of course, these accounts of the symbol as tool are practical and true - we do, in fact, use symbols in exactly this way. This factual use of symbols does not, however, imply that this is in principle the only way symbols can be used. The fact that symbols are used as tools does not imply that either they are tools or that they must be tools.

Spare uses symbols in a way that is far closer to an artistic use of stroke or colour. The paint stroke does not stand for, contain, transmit or somehow make us able to see the real picture behind the strokes and colours but is in fact the picture itself. This process is a manifestation or creation. It is an act itself, not a means. This active symbolisation disturbs the very concept of symbols themselves, with a split in Spare's work between 'symbols' and 'sigils'. In *The Book of Pleasure* Spare focuses explicitly on the construction of both symbols and sigils. It is in one of the sections on sigils, subtitled 'the psychology of believing', that we find the following: "We are not the object by the

perception, but by becoming it". This shift from perception to becoming signals a connection with a Deleuzo-Guattarian philosophy.

It is worth, at this point, placing the techniques Spare motivates within The Book of Pleasure inside the more general 'metaphysical' schema with which he operates. This centres on the two names KIA and ZOS, hence the name of the 'Zos-Kia Cultus', the magical 'current' or ethos associated with Spare as well as with Kenneth Grant and later, via Peter Carroll's work, with the Illuminates of Thanateros, the central magical order in the 'chaos magic current'.

Carroll suggests, in his work Liber Null, "the twin functions of will and perception is called Kia by magicians. Sometimes it is called spirit, or soul, or life force, instead". He goes on to say of Kia that it "is the consciousness, it is the elusive 'I' which confers self-awareness but does not seem to consist of anything itself. Kia can sometimes be felt as ecstasy or inspiration, but it is deeply buried in the dualistic mind". Magic, therefore, is for Carroll, "concerned with giving the Kia more freedom and flexibility and with providing means by which it can manifest its occult power".

Now Carroll is writing a working grimoire or grammar of magic, focused on a practical orientation, and as such his metaphysics is simply there to assist in the establishment of such a practical end. These comments on Kia are little more than a pragmatic use of certain names that enable the magician to explain to the student the basics of their working activity. For example, the fact that Carroll says that 'magicians' use the name Kia is in many ways disingenuous if you were looking for an accurate historical reading, since Spare is the principle magician to initiate the term. More importantly, though, Carroll's metaphysic converts Kia into a force which the magician then harnesses or expresses through their activity, enabling the new-comer to the field of magic to place their activity back within some sort of cause-effect paradigm, except this time one that relies upon the great life-force Kia, rather the laws of physical nature.

Spare, however, has a slightly more subtle and in many ways more interesting role for Kia within his work, particularly if the focus is maintained on The Book of Pleasure. Within this text Kia, whilst possibly a 'life force' is perhaps more adequately described as life itself. "Anterior to Heaven and Earth, in its aspect that transcends these, but not intelligence, it may be regarded as the primordial sexual principle, the idea of pleasure in self-love". This Kia, then, has numerous 'aspects', of which one is creativity itself, creation as process rather than object or product - Kia in this aspect takes the place of any 'creator' and it is this removal of the role of the creator that is central. Kia is self-manifesting. It is, in this regard, akin to what Deleuze calls 'difference', which is not a difference from or between anything but which is immanence itself, not immanent to anything. This is a form of pantheism before theism, a self-moving universe, a vitalism.

The basic worldview or ontology of Spare relies upon a vitalism that is shared with Deleuze. Of course, this vitalism is something Deleuze picks up from thinkers such as Bergson and so the similarities extend beyond Deleuze and Guattari. It is, however, the connection of the vitalism with the technique of a concrete embodiment of desire within

the sigil that draws Spare and Deleuze and Guattari closer still. Spares' techniques are fundamentally techniques of becoming. The difference of emphasis that is found when drawing Sparean Sigilisation towards Deleuzo-Guattarian becoming is fundamentally away from the problem of belief. To focus on techniques of becoming is to shift the emphasis away from simply 'removing' beliefs into a more positive activity. The removal or dissolution of beliefs is still a central theme in Spare but work on belief structures is nothing more than a pre-requisite for the techniques of becoming.

The 'primordial sexual principle', for example, is what Spare refers to as 'the new sexuality', which the technique of the 'death posture' is intended to access. This is a form of meditation, both physical and mantrical, using the formula of "Neither-Neither" to attain a state described as "Does not matter - need not be" which is formless. Called 'the death posture' because it aims to create "the dead body of all we believe" the intention behind this meditative practice is the removal of belief, both in content and form. Whilst the chaos magic current uses a technique called 'paradigm shifting' in order to break down ego structures, this is often posed in terms of a technique to break free from 'consensual reality'. This technique, whilst practical, rests upon an apparent paradox, in that it seems that the magician believes in their ability to not believe and as Julian Vayne suggests, "the chaos magick system rests upon a paradox. Namely that the system claims that 'nothing is true' and yet itself emerges from the 19th century attempt to create a grand theory of magick".

In this sense chaos magic rests upon an attempt to negate or suspend belief, an odd situation akin to philosophical scepticism. Philosophical scepticism, however, has a number of forms, one of which is Pyrrhonism, elucidated by writers such as Sextus Empiricus, where the aim of the sceptical process is a condition of bliss known as ataraxia, which follows the suspension of belief, known as epoche. This ataraxia is a state of quietude. It allows a release from scepticism through pursuing it to its end, in such a way that the sceptical doubt that is so easily established with regard to knowledge claims no longer has its disorientating power to produce a nihilism of belief. Whilst Spare's work at times resembles a powerful form of scepticism it would be rather strange to suggest that the aim is a form of quietude. In fact it would be more accurate to say that the techniques Spare puts forward produce exactly the opposite of a quietude, what might be called a form of orgiastic consciousness, which is this strange thing he calls 'the new sexuality'. This is an expanded and increased creativity, not a settled and contemplative quietude.

Is this right, however, since Spare talks about the Kia as the 'Atmospheric I'? Kenneth Grant reads Spare as close to a Ch'an or Zen like contemplation, "the adepts of which do not permit the mind to adhere to any of its thoughts". Although this is a claim that would need considerably more substantiation, my own feeling is that Spare's magical philosophy may resemble a Taoist rather than a Buddhist, even a Zen Buddhist, approach, where the activity on belief is less a process of negation and deconstructing than a process of freeing up and allowing a full flow of life. This is a subtle difference but may be said to be a question of whether the focus is on removing the ego and dissolving the self or whether it is on the expression of a fuller pre-individual life, such

that the question of the ego or self is, in some ways, secondary, to the reality of manifesting an orgiastic consciousness. "So long as the notion remains that there is 'compulsory bondage' in this World or even in dreams there is such bondage".

The therapeutic approach that may be found within the Pyrrhonian sceptic and which I would also suggest lies at the heart of 'ego-negating' strategies perceives, in the first instance, a problem to be overcome, a problem of the ego, the self. Removing or destroying belief results in a form of nihilistic scepticism, provoking spiritual crises that once more call forth therapies of quietude and acceptance. One of the key themes within Deleuzian thought is a struggle against such strategies of negation. The emphasis on strategies and models of becoming presupposes a fluid structure to belief but doesn't believe this to be anything other than a forerunner to a creative process. The struggle against belief is only necessary, after all, if belief restricts something and to forget what it is that is restricted, the impulse behind the struggle against belief, is to end in the nihilism against which Nietzsche warned.

For example, despite all the techniques that seem to deny belief in Spare's work, contained within a formula of 'Neither Neither', this is not a negation. It is a subtle shifting away from any 'belief' but it does not allow any duality to exist, no 'not X'. It prevents negation with suspension, hence the suggestion that it is in fact close to the epoche of the sceptics, a technique which also lies at the heart of Edmund Husserl's 'phenomenology' in which the epoche is used to suspend the 'natural attitude'. Spare's attitude to belief is in fact an attempt to free it up, as it were, from restrictions placed upon it by the consciousness, not an attempt to simply remove or deny it. It is, in essence, a technique of allowing the becoming of belief. "Belief, to be true, must be organic and sub-conscious".

It is to achieve this organic belief that the technique of sigilisation is introduced. In effect the sigils are not symbols containing anything, but rather they are expressions in which we consciously carry out specific operations in such a way as to allow an intuitive sub-conscious or pre-conscious desire to manifest. It re-orientates the sorcerer away from an ego centred strategy since the magician is never, in principle, capable of really knowing their desire except on this sub-conscious level. This sub-conscious level is pre-individual. It is not beneath or below or created through the ego or super-egoic structures but prior to and more fundamental than these. This is strongly akin to Deleuze's account of consciousness as a 'transcendental field' that "can be distinguished from experience in that it doesn't refer to an object or belong to a subject". In itself this transcendental field is nothing more than a "pure plane of immanence" that is constituted as a transcendental field by the production of the transcendent entity that is 'consciousness'. The pure plane of immanence - the great ocean of becoming - cares nothing for consciousness and only becomes a 'transcendental field' when it produces consciousness as an effect. Beneath all the currents of thought is the ocean from which they arise and into which they fall back, an ocean of becoming that has no concern with anything other than its own becoming. Consciousness in effect becomes a sort of self-defeating capacity when it is used to fulfil life; it is a detour, which we must consciously step back from. We, of course, have in principle no ability to know

beforehand quite where or how this might be carried out - hence the need to employ an experimental approach. Sigilisation marries a true experimentalism of automatic drawing with the conscious thought that 'this X is our desire', a desire no longer possessed by us but by which we are possessed. Spare is Deleuzian in the sense that he no longer wants a focus on the 'magician' as controller, perceiver or creator. Sparean sorcery is a technique not of ego dissolution but of practical experimentation with a pre-individual plane of immanence, the ocean of becoming.

"The Sigil being a vehicle, serves the purpose of protecting consciousness from the direct manifestation of the (consciously unacknowledged) obsession, conflict is avoided with any incompatible ideas and neither gains separate personality" Spare says and it is this subtle fictionalisation process that is the true heart of the sigilisation process. What is anomalous in Spare's sigilisation process is that it is a paradoxically conscious practice aimed at releasing the sub-conscious: it is, in effect, a deliberate attempt to consciously do something that can't be done consciously. It is an attempt to plug into the orgiastic consciousness, the Sparean sub-conscious, in an experimental, structured and repeatable operation.

Molecularity and becoming

At this point I want to try and draw the threads of this essay together, through the notion of becoming as an experimentation. Deleuze and Guattari provide a model through which we might approach becoming on its own terms. This accomplishes, in a different manner, a similar goal to that put forward in Spare with regard to belief. This is a process of stepping outside the problem of belief. Once this is done another positive problem can be posed, the problem of creation and becoming. Deleuze and Spare share two fundamental aspects in their positive thought and practice. Firstly, they both work with a model of a universe of becoming and secondly they share the attitude that the appropriate technique in such a world is experimentation.

In *The Book of Pleasure* we find a sort of 'definition' statement by Spare: "Magic, the reduction of properties to simplicity, making them transmutable to utilise them afresh by direction, without capitalisation, bearing fruit many times". This is the process I have called 'plugging into an orgiastic consciousness', which makes fluid the concepts of matter, thought and being, in such a way that limitations are little more than temporary boundaries of actuality, not possibility. It is both a practical and a theoretical process, one which Spare calls 'magic' and which, in a Deleuzian vein we might call 'making the difference'. Spare supposes the 'properties of simplicity' that Deleuze and Guattari call the 'molecularity' of becoming. Magic in this reading would therefore be a difference making activity within a world of becoming characterised by the flux of fundamental simplicity or molecularity at the heart of the universe.

The Deleuzo-Guattarian model of becoming gives us a structure through which we might see this process of 'plugging into' the orgiastic consciousness as the principle technique of the sorcerer. The multiplicity of multiplicities, all ever shifting, form the plane of activity but the border crossings are never, in principle, predictable even if some may be more familiar than others - the role of drugs for example provides an

unpredictable if familiar route to crossing borders of consciousness. Drugs in fact provide a crucial example of the way in which the practical thought of Deleuze and Guattari could be used and is intended by them to be used. The famous maxim of Deleuze and Guattari, which they take from Henry Miller, is that we should attempt “to succeed in getting drunk, but on pure water”. The success of such a process rests upon the structures of becoming that are similar to those underlying Spare’s attempts at creating organic beliefs through sigilisation but both of these processes are techniques of experimentation.

Deleuze and Guattari’s thought enable the sorceries of Spare to be retrieved from the linear arrangements made by someone like Kenneth Grant who wants to assimilate him to a particular magical current whilst allowing such suggestions to provoke an interesting series of connections. They also offer a model of matter that no longer needs concepts such as ‘aether’ to allow non-causal connections. It brings the role of the writer and the artist to the fore rather than the model of the mystic and prompts experimentation and open structures rather than ideas of verification and inexpressible experientiality contained within assimilations of magic to science combined with the role of the secret. Magic is another form of knowledge, often relying upon the secret of the inexpressible experience, but such an approach is in danger of forgetting the other side of activity, that in which ‘knowledge’ is an embodied, active process of experimental learning. Any emphasis on an over simple concept of knowledge will fall prey to the permanent danger of a debilitating scepticism. I have only been able to give some very broad suggestions in this essay, but the purpose is to put forward a notion of another current within magical practice, one that runs alongside all human activity; the activity of the experimental and anomalous becoming which may be found at the heart of any notion of freedom. As such magic - like philosophy - has less importance for knowledge than for an ethical practice of relations with the living.

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The Living Word of Zos

by Robert Ansell

A Personal Recollection first published in AOS: A Celebration, 14th May, 2006

In life we sometimes encounter an individual who has a profound influence on the way we see the world, and more rarely, on the way the world sees us. Many years ago, I met such a man. Our first contact, through the pages of a book, made only a slight impression on me, but I was young and the distractions of that volume many. Six years later my love of books brought me to into the service of the auctioneers Sotheby's and

here, one morning in 1986, the artist and publisher Austin Osman Spare and I were formally introduced.

Pickford Waller Ex-Libris, 1912 - Image © Copyright Fulgur Limited

My professional mentor was Simon Heneage, a man of exceptional kindness and generosity. Simon was astute in recognising a rebel without a cause and, no doubt for this reason, he asked me to comment upon a small pen and ink drawing. It was a design for an Edwardian ex-libris, but somehow the artist had brought life into an impossible pairing; the head of a mallard bursting out from a strange floral composition. It was at once exquisite, unsettling and masterful. I studied it intently as Simon introduced me to the story of the artist – a boy genius, gifted, flawed, later a London recluse and mystery. It seemed an extraordinary life, mythic and full of pathos, but as I gazed into the intricate lines of the drawing I was overwhelmed by a sense of absolute familiarity. A few days later, and years before I understood what such an undertaking involved, I announced to bemused colleagues that I was going to write a biography for the artist. In retrospect it was more of a commitment to the man than to his life, but my rôle had yet to be made clear for me, and the enthusiasm of youth is seldom concerned with detail.

During the early winter of 1986, my cursory research into the life of Austin Osman Spare revealed an artist dismissed by his contemporary critics. Common themes seemed to involve him “dabbling in the occult” and “turning his back on society.” These clichés seemed glib even to my inexperienced eye, yet if these obstacles stood in the way of a more intimate understanding, events were to change my perspective within weeks. In the November of 1986 I was asked at short notice to attend a house visit for an important client. It was my first such visit for Sotheby’s and I felt ill-prepared, but despite reservations I found myself dispatched to deepest Dorset in search of a house referred to simply as ‘The Eye.’ After stopping for directions in Corfe Castle, I arrived at the gate to a discrete drive flanked by a high hedge – there was no name – but on the gatepost my gaze was met by a cyclopic eye motif that glared hypnotically out at the world.

Kaikhosru Sorabji - © Sorabji Archive

The house was the home of the reclusive composer Kaikhosru Sorabji, then ninety-four years old. After my long journey Sorabji’s assistant, Alastair Hinton, welcomed me into a large drawing room full of strange and exotic antiques. The scene seemed to have lain unchanged for decades and to my naïveté it held an unfamiliar glamour. Uncertain and nervous, I raised my eyes and found, to my astonishment, a large pen and wash drawing by a very familiar artist. I recall identifying the picture and Alastair guiding me towards a signed vellum copy of *The Book of Pleasure* and a deluxe copy of *The Focus of Life*, before leaving me to continue with my professional assessment. Standing alone in that silent and dusky room, with a shaft of sunlight streaming onto Sorabji’s parlour grand and his shelves lined with exquisitely bound rarities, I looked up at the drawing and breathed the air of an era still vital, yet long passed. In these few moments AOS seemed to transcend glib cliché and become a living truth. Seldom does life offer such

profound clarity.

In early 1987, armed and encouraged by Simon, and seemingly beckoned by my subject, I ventured tentatively out onto the path I now know so intimately. In search of my quarry I made enquiries to various booksellers and thankfully these produced a copy of Kenneth Grant's *The Magical Revival*. Here I found an entirely different man from the failed artist of the fine arts academia, AOS had become ZOS: mythic, potent and sexed. It was to become the entrée to another Spare, warm and humorous, later enfolded by the intimate record of *Zos Speaks!*, but at that time a man glimpsed through a glass darkly. Whilst I grappled with reconciling this 50s Brixton sorcerer to the Edwardian maverick artist, fate once again intervened to provide a crucial segment of the puzzle. A casual remark led one of my colleagues at Sotheby's, Dendy Easton, to mention he had recently met an elderly man who claimed to have known Spare well. I was intrigued and in the January of 1987 found myself writing to an unexpected Frank Letchford.

L-R: Gavin Semple, Frank Letchford and Robert Ansell at the AOS exhibition to celebrate the launch of *Fulgur*, 1992

If Sorabji had represented Spare's elitist Edwardian heights, Frank represented the Elephant and Castle humanitarian. Warm, engaging and ever helpful, Frank opened many doors for me, brokering introductions to Dennis Bardens, Ian Kenyur-Hodgkins and eventually, to my great friend and co-conspirator, Gavin Semple. Working together Gavin and I found camaraderie and ultimately inspiration; for it was during this time our research unearthed an early notepaper design by Spare as a 'Publisher of Rare Editions.' In this moment was revealed the fulgurant path that now lies for so many years behind us, born of a seemingly unfulfilled dream.

These events are now memories, yet still the hand of Spare draws a line across the pages of my life – sometimes almost unperceivable, at others unmistakable, dancing, twisting, but always living, an influence that outlasts all others. His early experiments with automatism and the philosophy of the "Neither-Neither" were pioneering excursions into the nature of creative vision and these have been a source of inspiration to me, as they have to many others. That my early understandings of the man have now given way to a wiser insight has perhaps more to do with the lessons of my own life than of knowledge gained from books and meeting those who knew him well. For, when you strip away the myths and fallacies surrounding Spare's long creative path, what remains is the story of an incredibly driven man who, despite the endless hardships dealt to him by fate, refused to give up or compromise. Fifty years after his death it is this resolve, the Stoicism of Zos, that seems a much more authentic legacy than the cults of acquisitive formulae descended from popular myth. To suffer greatly and find therein a deeper understanding of the human condition is perhaps the most humbling of all ennoblements: Spare lived and limned that life, lest we forget. Austin Osman Spare, philosopher, mystic, artist and Stoic – your legacy lives on still.

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Late Nineteenth-Century Automatism and Proto-Cybernetic Communication: the case of
Austin Osman Spare
by Chris Miles

Introduction

The figure I will be talking to you about today, Austin Osman Spare (1886-1956), is uniquely suited to helping us investigate the shifting conceptions of automatism in the long nineteenth-century.

An artist, writer and self-described sorcerer, Spare was initially a celebrated young addition to the London scene of the late 1890s and early 1900s, earning enthusiastic praise from George Bernard Shaw and John Singer Sargent, amongst others. However, the decidedly unusual style and subject matter of his art, as well as his prickly temperament, began to increasingly isolate him from the bohemian establishment and by the time of his death in 1956 Spare was largely forgotten and his work mostly unshown.

His reputation has been progressively growing since the early 1970s, however, as a result of a number of books written by Kenneth Grant, a friend of Spare's later, down-and-out years and, not coincidentally, a disciple of Aleister Crowley.

Grant's enthusiastic support of Spare's art and writing has resulted in his work having a strong influence on modern occultism and his paintings, sketches and ephemera have recently begun to command high prices at auction.

Central to Spare's oeuvre are the small number of books that he published during his own lifetime that outlined his own personal magical belief system. This system affords automatism a key position and consequently, Spare is one of the few accomplished artists in history to have written extensively on their own use of automatic processes. What I hope to do today is to outline the manner in which Spare's automatism curiously synthesises the tension between the nineteenth-century spiritualist tradition and the subsequent move towards the 'scientification' of the phenomena produced by that tradition, using as a unique catalyst his magical interpretation of Darwin's theory of evolution.

The Spiritualist Tradition

Within the context of Spiritualism, taken as the rough cluster of beliefs and practices

that evolved from the initial performances of Maggie and Kate Fox in 1848 and the years following, there are a number of processes often identified as automatisms – automatic writing (practiced by Kate Fox herself), use of the Ouija Board or Planchette, table-tilting, automatic speech and automatic drawing. However, as has been pointed out, for instance by Daniel Cottom, Spiritualism does not represent a very clearly organised or homogenous movement: there was, from its inception, no single guiding voice, the Fox sisters apparently uninterested in providing any form of theoretical or methodological framework for their workings. Consequently, the Spiritualist movement demonstrates a wonderfully wide body of variations across matters of belief, practice and nomenclature. However, much of the early rhetoric produced by supporters of the Fox sisters and the movement that followed in their wake shares the use of the telegraph as a root metaphor. Phrases such as the “spiritual telegraph”, “telegraphic dispatches from spirits” and “celestial telegraph” were common ways of describing the table-rapping phenomenon.

Indeed, Andrew Jackson Davis, a monumental figure in the early history of American Spiritualism, framed the events in Hydesville (the Fox’s hometown) as the final successful result of repeated attempts by Benjamin Franklin (that is, the spirit of Franklin) to establish an “electrical method of telegraphing from the second sphere to the earth’s inhabitants” (Davis, 1851).

From this perspective, Spiritualism is fundamentally an automatism – the seer or medium (in whose presence the raps are manifested) is a telegraph station, a conduit for electrical messages that themselves echo the (by 1848) modish cadences of Samuel Morse’s code.

Work by R. Laurence Moore and Werner Sollors, amongst others, has demonstrated the strong connections between the growth of the physical and spiritual telegraphs. For my purposes today, what is important about this relationship is the common communication scheme that makes the metaphor so appealing.

auto1a.jpg

As we can see here, the telegraph, with its encoded and decoded tappings serving clients on both ends of a transmission conduit is an obvious analogue for the Spiritualist enterprise and one that neatly transferred an acceptable marketing model to the practice. It is noteworthy, indeed, that the communicative role of the medium quickly evolved from a vaguely-defined facilitator or catalyst to that of a more clear and familiar operator. Initially, the Fox sisters’ presence brought on the rapping of tables – they themselves were not involved in any communicative action (speech, writing, etc.): people asked simple questions and then heard rappings which were interpreted as responses. However, as the crowds grew, news traveled and the opportunities for public demonstrations increased – and so there came a need for a more sophisticated and efficient, and perhaps more clearly performative, communicative turn. The initial steps taken were introduced by an acquaintance of the Foxes, Isaac Post, and consisted of a coding of the alphabet to enable the rappings to more practicably spell out words and

sentences (rather than signal simply 'yes', 'no' and the lower numbers). Increasing refinements to the speed of communication in the séance resulted in an increased use of the body of the medium – the hands and the voice in particular became subsumed into the communicative network, or rather the lines of communication became internalized into the body of the medium. The planchette and prototypes of the Ouija Board enabled a far quicker processing of the alphabet but necessitated the highly significant surrender of the body to the spiritual telegraphic mechanism. This surrender was accomplished with little questioning or opposition in part due to the distinct lack of ideological framework around the Fox sisters' early performances and also in part due to the established (if distinctly marginal) traditions of Swendonborgian seership and Mesmerism. Responding to what well might have been external suggestion, the Fox sisters and those who rapidly followed in their wake, began to surrender their bodily autonomy in order to become living Morse keys.

The production of automatic text thus became a commonplace practice amongst the many varieties of Spiritualist gatherings. For Frederic Myers, a one-time President of the Society for Psychical Research, writing at the end of the 19th century in his canonical, two-volume work entitled *Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death*, automatism, which he divides into sensory and motor varieties, provided the strongest evidence for "something transcending sensory experience in the reserves of human faculty" (Vol. 1, p.222).

Myers' definition of motor automatism will now serve us as a convenient jumping-off point for an examination of Austin Osman Spare's own understanding and practice. Psychologists and physiologists had, by the time of Myers' writing, attempted to include automatism within their own disciplinary bodies. The physiologist William Carpenter's 1874 coining of the term "ideomotor" to cover any human behaviour that does not depend upon volition was perhaps the initial step to begin to include the variegated phenomena of the automatisms as well as facets of mesmerism and hypnosis within the medico-scientific paradigm. Late nineteenth-century psychology, and in particular the school of dynamic psychiatry which was to influence the later Surrealists so deeply, began to try and offer non-Spiritualist explanations for the quite obvious and repeatable phenomena that automatism produced: Pierre Janet's important *L'Automatisme psychologique*, published in 1889, was an attempt to analyse the practices of mediums in order to both explain them using Janet's model of the mind and then use them for therapeutic purposes.

The scientific investigation of automatism included, on its periphery, the work of those 'believers' in the reality of spiritual communication who wished to bring empirical rigour to the examination of psychic or spiritual practices.

Foremost amongst such figures, of course, were the members of the Society for Psychical Research. The writings of Frederick Myers, an SPR member and President, provide us with a clear example of the attempted intellectual fusion of the medical with the spiritual in an attempt to position automatism within a scientific paradigm. The following quote serves to illustrate Myers' rhetorical hybridisation of medical language:

In the first place, then, our automatisms are independent phenomena; they are what the physician calls idiognomonic. That is to say, they are not merely symptomatic of some other affection, or incidental to some profounder change. The mere fact, for instance, that a man writes messages which he does not consciously originate will not, when taken alone, prove anything beyond this fact itself as to the writer's condition. He may be perfectly sane, in normal health, and with nothing unusual observable about him. This characteristic –provable by actual observation and experiment –distinguishes our automatisms from various seemingly kindred phenomena.

(Myers, Vol 2. p. 87)

Myers theorized that all of the automatisms were what he called “nunciative”, or message-bearing, but that in most cases those messages originated from “within the automatist's own mind” (p. 88). This position enabled him to align himself, at least superficially, with the less-marginalised, more scientifically-established, work of contemporary psychiatric theorists and physiologists. However, for Myers, what this really meant was that there was a part of the mind that was innately sensitive to the spiritual or transcendent world and it was that part, the subliminal, as he referred to it, which was taking control over motor movements in a way that Myers (perhaps inadvertently displaying his Spiritualist sympathies) likened to a telegraph operator. For Myers, then, automatisms were a means for the subliminal self to communicate with the supraliminal self and so make the latter aware of a large ocean of information and impressions that it would normally be deaf and blind to.

Spare's Automatism

Austin Osman Spare's theory of automatism can be seen as a parallel, if far more extreme, version of Myer's attempt to frame automatism within the language of contemporary research upon the mind, drawing it away from its rather anti-intellectual roots in Spiritualism and the séance and attempting to couch it in more rational, scientific, if still quite spiritual, rhetoric.

Although Spare had little interest in the Spiritualist and séance scene he was deeply involved in the occult revival of the late 19th century: he was a member of Aleister Crowley's Argenteum Astrum Lodge, familiar with the writings of Eliphas Levi and S. L. MacGregor-Mathers (one of the founders of The Order of The Golden Dawn) and also deeply influenced by H. P. Blavatsky's Theosophy movement.

He was, however, first and foremost, an artist and automatic drawing for him was an important, practical element in his method as an artist.

In 1913, Spare published his third book, entitled *The Book of Pleasure (Self-Love): The Psychology of Ecstasy*. This extraordinary work is a collection of short chapters, heavily illustrated with automatic drawings of varying complexity and finish, that impart to the reader the details of Spare's creed – his personal mythology, his sorcery, his magic.

One of the chapters is entirely concerned with an explication of the practice of automatic drawing and this, along with a more extensive article co-authored with his friend and fellow-artist, Frederick Carter, and published in 'Form' magazine in 1916, provides us with a detailed view of Spare's theory of automatism.

Before moving on to an examination of these texts, a quick browsing of the illustrations to *The Book of Pleasure* will alert us to a few obvious features. Drawings which appear to be automatic in nature (they are composed of continuous, meandering lines often appearing to develop the figurative from otherwise abstract forms) are usually framed by a mixture of cryptic text, what look like letters form an unknown alphabet and stylised miniature diagrams. Furthermore, there are some illustrations which have perhaps some automatic component but in other respects are far more 'worked out'.

We can, then, through a superficial examination of these drawings, get the general impression that for Spare automatism is an integrated part of artistic composition and design.

Turning now to Spare's own explication of automatic drawing – Spare tells us that "automatic drawing is a vital means of expressing what is at the back of your mind (the dream-man) and is a quick and easy means to begin being courageously original – eventually it evolves itself into the coveted spontaneous expression and the safe omniscience is assured" (TBOP, p.55)

Automatic drawing, then, is used by Spare to initially provide access to the "back of the mind" which can, through an evolution of practice, lead to "spontaneous expression". Spare's definition of Art is drawn in similar lines, it being for him "the instinctive application (to observations or sensations) of the knowledge latent in the subconsciousness" (p.55).

Although it might appear that for Spare, the "dream-man" is being passively channelled in the practice of automatic drawing, there is in fact a significant degree of interaction between the 'consciousness' and the "subconsciousness". Initially, for example, the artist must practice the easy, flowing production of "simple forms". Spare describes this as the hand being "trained from the accustomed practice to work freely and of itself" (p.55). The aim being to "allow the hand to draw itself...with the least deliberation possible" (p.56).

Of course, a traditional Spiritualist approach to the automatic banishes any possibility of conscious deliberation. The medium surrenders themselves to an entirely external message stream and training would be fundamentally anathema. Indeed, the use of the word 'sensitive' to describe many practicing (and professional) mediums indicates a natural ability to serve as a conduit for the spirit realm, rather than an achieved mastery of technique.

Furthermore, Spare's conception of the automatic process is strongly goal-orientated.

So, once one has achieved the freedom to let one's hand draw on its own then one has to consider what one wishes the hand to draw.

Spare directs his automatism through the use of what he calls his "sigil method". Briefly, one condenses the written goal into a compact monogram which bears no visual relation to the sense of the desire. This 'sigil' is then concentrated upon in order to aid in the production of an oblivious or vacuous state in the conscious mind. Then the hand having been trained to draw on its own even when the conscious mind is not directing it, the automatic drawing is produced corresponding to the original desired goal.

Spare's method is a form of two-way communication, then. The sigil contains a goal stated by the conscious mind which is then encoded and presented to the unconsciousness, the "dream-man". The hand, trained (in an analogue to the highly trained hand of the Morse operator) to respond to the promptings of the unconscious thus expresses the visualised 'answer' to the conscious mind.

From the essay with Frederick Carter we may obtain an even clearer sense of the goal-directed nature of Spare's method:

"An 'automatic' scribble of twisting and interlacing lines permits the germ of ideas in the subconscious mind to express, or at least suggest itself to the consciousness. From the mass of procreative shapes, full of fallacy, a feeble embryo of ideas may be selected and trained by the artist to full growth and power. By these means may the profoundest depths of memory be drawn upon and the springs of instinct tapped"

(Form, p. 2)

Although this essay is presented within the context of an art journal rather than being extracted from Spare's highly personal presentation of sorcery, the comparatively more svelte discourse highlights the strong sense of what I will call proto-cybernetics that informs his methodology. By proto-cybernetics what I mean is that the process Spare describes is one that can be formulated in terms of a goal-directed communication and control system that uses knowledge of results to self-correct. Although such terms belong to the early days of cybernetics, particularly the work discussed in the Macy Foundation Conferences during the 1940s and 50s, it is worthwhile noting that some of the core ideas that fed into the study of self-correcting systems were already present at the beginning of the twentieth-century in the form of theories of learning and behaviour based upon what was called "knowledge of results". The work of the American psychologist Edward Thorndike would provide a prime example.

Let me re-frame the Sparean conception of automatism within these terms:

- Automatism is a technique that focuses on goal attainment. The artist must first establish a system which works fluidly and dynamically to respond to a particular level of control.
- The "dream-man" and conscious mind are mediated by the hand – and the eye.

- The conscious mind forms a goal and proceeds to visualise this goal in a manner that it itself cannot interpret, but the “dream-man” can.
- The “dream-man”, responding to the expression of the goal, proceeds to express it own attempts to attain this goal through the hand (which has now been uncoupled from conscious control).
- The eye observes the hand’s expression and then carries this information to the conscious mind. Spare’s language regarding the subsequent stage is important to remember now – the artist “selects” and “trains” the images – the unconscious is “tapped”: not allowed full dominance but rather actively nurtured. The artist, therefore, is responsible for using, adapting, “training” the flow of images from the “dream-man”-controlled hand.

Clearly, a delicate system is being articulated here, wherein the conscious artist, at certain points, steers the hand which otherwise is controlled by the unconsciousness. Indeed, what Spare would appear to be describing is a negative feedback loop designed to control for a particular goal and which needs to communicate at two different levels, the conscious and the unconscious.

auto2.jpg

When one considers the exact flow of communication and control in the system that Spare describes a number of features become evident. Although the unconsciousness is the initial source for the drawing, there is conscious judgement at play – at some point, when the artist’s eye notices an artistic opportunity, the hand is once more taken under conscious control. There is, it would therefore seem, an actually quite limited role for the unconsciousness – it provides the germ of an idea, the concentrated essence of something that the artist may immediately develop into something more designed or composed.

However, for Spare, the unconsciousness is not just producing random output for the conscious mind to elaborate upon, but rather unfettered, unmodified apprehension of what he called the “storehouse of memories” (p.47). Spare describes this in the following way:

“Know the sub-consciousness to be an epitome of all experience and wisdom, past incarnations as men, animals, birds, vegetable life, etc., etc. everything that exists, has and ever will exist. Each being a stratum in the order of evolution. Naturally, then, the lower we probe into these strata, the earlier will be the forms of life we arrive at; the last is the Almighty Simplicity.

(TBOP, p.47)

The admixture of terminology here from Blavatskian Theosophy and Darwinian

evolutionary theory reflects the highly syncretic nature of Spare's conception of the "storehouse of memory". Centrally, the information and experience he alludes to are entirely internal to the artist yet they are, Spare contends, real "existences" contained within us. Spare uses, indeed, the word "Karmas" to describe particularly the earlier existences that an artist might wish to experience, such as the incarnation of a bird or bat. And yet, at the same time as he uses a term from such an obviously Orientalist-mystical background he is also invoking the empirical scientific aura associated with Darwin's legacy. So, we read:

"The law of Evolution is retrogression of function governing progression of attainment, i.e. the most wonderful our attainments, the lower in the scale of life the function that governs them. Our knowledge of flight is determined by that desire causing the activity of our bird Karmas" (p. 47)

So, in conclusion, if automatisms were seen by Spiritualists as message streams from the dead, and if psychiatry subsumed those messages into the individual, then Spare fuses the two perspectives with a pseudo-Darwinian theory of evolutionary history being contained within the individual unconsciousness. In this sense, the 'dead' that Spare is in contact with are dead evolutionary links, 'atavisms' from our pre-history that express themselves through the artist's surrendered hand – in a cybernetically-controlled evolutionary telegraph.

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Faculty of Communication and Media Studies,
Eastern Mediterranean University,
Gazi Mağusa,
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Note: This paper was delivered as part of the 'Automatic Creativity' panel at the 'Minds Bodies Machines' conference held at Birkbeck College, London, on 6th and 7th of July, 2007. I have dispensed with footnoting the paper and instead have provided a bibliography of works cited at the end of the piece.

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Austin Spare: A Bibliography
by Clive Harper

First published in Notes Towards a Bibliography of Austin Osman Spare, 1992-2006

Earth Inferno
A Book of Satyrs
The Book of Pleasure
The Focus of Life
Anathema of Zos

These texts are an extract from Clive's epic and ongoing bibliographic wanderings in the byways of Zosiana. A revised and updated edition of his work will appear under the Fulgur imprint in the near future.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Earth Inferno

A1. EARTH INFERNO

A1. Earth Inferno, 1905 - title page

A1a. EARTH | I·N·F·E·R·N·O AUSTIN O. SPARE | (On front cover which serves as title).

Normally, brown paper wraps; 17.75" x 13.5"; 30 pp. 1905. 265 numbered and signed copies. Foreword by C.H.L. Eleven illustrations and many decorations by Spare.

The book was announced under the title EARTH for publication at the end of February, 1905 in an edition of 265 numbered and signed copies. Two hundred copies were supposed to be bound in thick paper covers at 2/6; fifty to be bound in "strong vellum boards" containing one colour plate at 5/- and fifteen were to be printed on hand-made paper, bound in "vellum covers" including six hand-coloured illustrations at £1-1s.

A1. Earth Inferno, 1905 - upper cover

Most copies seen have printed paper wraps – presumably the 2/6 edition. Some copies have been seen in printed vellum boards (although with no colour plate). These copies, presumably, represent the 5/- edition. Sotheby's sale of 21 November, 1995 included a copy in "original [unprinted] vellum with a fine contemporary watercolour drawing by Spare" which may well be the £1-1-0 edition.

Copies are also occasionally found in printed green boards.

In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at 10/6.

A1b. REPRINTED 1976 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS.

Brown imitation cloth casing; 12.75" x 10"; 200 copies at £14.75. The extensive dust-wrapper notes effectively constitute a new introduction. Also issued on microfiche at £2.00.

A1c. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.

In Collected Works [see A8].

A1d. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow.

Red card wraps; 11.25" x 8.25"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with red lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990. Copies also found in pale green wraps with no date.

A1e. REPRINTED c1985 – AXIL PRESS, Seattle.

Parchment effect wraps; 8.5" x 5.5".

A1f. REPRINTED 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.

In, From The Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A1g. REPRINTED c1990.

No publisher or date given; 8.25" x 11.75"; photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine clip.

A1h. REPRINTED c1990. THE DEATH PRESS.

Green card wraps; 8.5" x 5.5" with Synopsis of Inferno diagram on front cover.

Original page numbers and borders deleted, with several pages being reproduced out of sequence.

A1i. ITALIAN EDITION 1999.

Privately printed Livorno, Italy. With a note by the publishers, Roberto Migliussi and Stefano Landi. Cream card wraps 8" x 11" ; 200 numbered copies.

A few copies were issued in black papered boards 8" x 12".

A1j. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Inferno Erde translated by Michael De Witt published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 27-54.

A1k. POLISH TRANSLATION

Pieklo na Ziemi translated and with an introduction by Krzysztof Azarewicz has been announced by Lashtal Press.

DVD Earth Inferno

A short film inspired by Spare's first book was released on DVD by Fulgur Limited. The film was produced in Argentina by Mor Navon and Julian Moguillansky.

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A Book of Satyrs

A2. A BOOK OF SATYRS

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - title page

A2a. A BOOK OF | SATYRS | BY AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE | [design] | Co-operative Printing Society Ltd., 1907. 300 signed and numbered copies. Vellum backed grey boards; 17.5" x 13".

A few copies were apparently issued with loose pages, in grey boards with green ties.

Eleven full page drawings and many small decorations.

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - upper cover, issue with without ties

The “signed and numbered original edition, Artist’s Bookplate” was advertised in the 1916 Form at 30/-. This had increased to Two Guineas in the 1921 Form.

A2b. A BOOK OF | SATYRS | BY AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE | [design] | London: John Lane, The Bodley Head | New York: John Lane Company, 1909. 300 copies. Vellum backed; green boards; 17.5” x 13”.

This edition had an additional illustration “Pleasure”, the introduction by James Guthrie was re-set to cover one and a half pages and some vignettes re-arranged.

In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at One Guinea.

A2c. REPRINTED (2b.) 1979 – 93 PUBLISHING, Quebec. Green cartridge paper wraps, 17.5” x 13”.

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - upper cover, issue with ties

A2d. REPRINTED (2a.) 1979 – [as illustrations to SSOTBME]. Nigel Grey-Turner. 9” x 6”; laminated wraps which reproduce “The Blas’ Bacchante” from The Golden Hind, Vol. 2, No. 5.

A2e. REPRINTED (2b.) 1989 – VENUS, London. Numbered limited edition of illustrations reproduced on postcards; together with Spare’s introduction [abridged] in a plastic sleeve.

A2f. REPRINTED (2b.) c1990. No publisher or date given. 11.75” x 8.25”; photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine clip.

A2g. REPRINTED (2a.) 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow. Pale green card wraps; 11.5” x 8”; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with green lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990.

A2h. REPRINTED (2a.) 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle. In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A2i. ITALIAN TRANSLATION. (2b.) 1997 – BELFORTE GRAFICA, Livorno. Translated, with additional material, Roberto Migliussi. Cream card wraps; 13” x 9.5”; 400 numbered copies.

A2j. REPRINTED. (2b.) c1990. No publisher or date given. Yellow cards wraps 11.75” x 8.25”. Reset limitation statement – “Five Hundred Copies of this Work have been printed.”

A2k. FRENCH TRANSLATION (2b) c1990 – LES PRESSES DE BABALON , Quebec.
Un Livre de Satyres , buff card wraps 8" x 11". Guthrie's introduction is not included.

A2l. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Das Buch der Satyrn translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 55-84.

A2m. REPRINTED (2b) 2001 – BLAKKSTARR PRESS

As part of Automatism – A collection of writings and drawings by Austin Osman Spare.
Subscribers edition of 75 numbered copies 11" x 18" handbound decorative paper covered boards. Some copies issued in cloth covered boards, with matching wraparound outer cover.

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The Book of Pleasure
A3. THE BOOK OF PLEASURE (SELF LOVE)
A3. The Book of Pleasure, 1913 - title page

A3a. THE BOOK OF PLEASURE (SELF LOVE). | THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY. | 1909- 1913 | [illustration] | LONDON: | Printed by the Co-operative Printing Society Limited, Tudor Street, E.C. | Published by the Author, 8b, Golders Green Parade, N.W. | [short rule] | 1913.

Bound in black cloth, lettered in white on front board - THE | BOOK OF PLEASURE | (SELF-LOVE) | THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY | AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE.

Nine full page half-tone illustrations and numerous drawings and symbols.

800 Copies[?]. In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at 10/6. 4+60 pp. 15.5" x 10.5".

A3. The Book of Pleasure, 1913 - upper cover standard edition

A number of copies were bound in vellum. In 1916, these were described as "Signed. Artist's Bookplate" and offered by The Morland Press at 30/-. The bookplate has led a number of dealers to catalogue such copies as "author's own copy" and to price accordingly. Some vellum bound copies do not have the bookplate.

A3b. REPRINTED 1975 - 93 PUBLISHING, Quebec.
Black cloth; 15.25" x 10.25"; dustwrapper reproduces "The Death Posture".
With a new foreword by Kenneth Grant; 1000 numbered copies.
Originally sold at \$44 but later reduced to \$25.

A3c. REPRINTED 1977 - MORTON PRESS.

White wraps; printed blue; 11.75" x 8.25"; 100 copies. This impression is evidently the basis of a later reprint found with yellow card covers, being held together with industrial staples.

A3d. MICROFICHE EDITION, c1978 - ASKIN PUBLISHERS.

Issued at £2.

A3e. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 - SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.

In Collected Works [see A8].

A3f. REPRINTED 1987 - SUT ANUBIS.

Black card wraps, lettered in white. 11.75" x 8.25".

A3g. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 - BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS,
Glasgow

Red card wraps, 11.5" x 8", 200 copies.

A3h. REPRINTED 1993 - FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.

In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A3i. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1993 - ALL'INSEGNA DI ISHTAR, Torino.

Translated by Caterina Porcheddu. Introduction by Dario Spada (merely a translation of Robert Ansell's essay from The Bookplate Designs of Austin Osman Spare).

Laminated card wraps; 9.5" x 6.5"; 666 numbered copies together with 50 copies hors commerce.

A3j(*). A new edition with footnotes on Spare's magical techniques has been announced by Fulgur, although it is understood that publication is not imminent.

A3k. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Das Buch der Freude translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 85-186.

A3l. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1996

Das Buch der Ekstatischen Freude translated and with an introduction by Marcus M.Jungkurth. Published by Kersken-Canbaz Verlag, laminated card wraps 5" x 8".

A3m. REPRINTED 2003 - I-H-O BOOKS, Thame.

A reset edition as part of Ethos, pp 27-150. Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9".

A3n. FRENCH TRANSLATION

Le Livre du Plaisir translated by Jean-Luc Colnot and Philippe Pissier published on the internet.

A3o. POLISH TRANSLATION

Ksiega Rozkoszy translated by Krzysztof Azarewicz with an introduction by Gavin W.Semple, has been announced by Okultura.

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The Focus of Life
A4. THE FOCUS OF LIFE
A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - title page

A4a. The Focus of Life: The Mutterings of AOS: | written and illustrated by Austin Osman Spare. | Edited by Frederick Carter with an introduction | by Francis Marsden. | [illustration] | Printed and Published by the Morland Press | Ltd., 190 Ebury Street, London SW1 MCMXXI
Frontis, title vignette and 11 full page illustrations. Quarter vellum with buckram sides, t.e.g., lettered in gold on the spine "THE FOCUS OF LIFE". 12.5" x 10"; 6+44 pp. 50 copies, numbered and signed on the half-title. This edition deluxe was sold for Two Guineas.

Later issues have a slip pasted over the third and fourth lines of the title page reading "With an introduction by Francis Marsden".

A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - upper cover deluxe issue

A4b. As 4a. Brown papered boards and white buckram spine lettered in black "THE FOCUS OF LIFE". 600 copies. This was described as a "limited edition" (and elsewhere as the ordinary edition) and sold for one guinea.

A4c. REPRINTED 1976 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS
Blue imitation cloth casing, 12.75" x 10", 500 copies at £12.75. With a new introduction by Stephen Skinner.
Also sold as a microfiche at £2.

A4d. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds
In Collected Works [see A8].

A4e. REPRINTED 1990 – (AS NOW FOR REALITY) MANDRAKE PRESS LTD.,
Thame.
11.75" x 8.25" with nine poems by Aleister Crowley to accompany the plates and an essay by Keith Richmond. One thousand numbered copies.

A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - upper cover standard issue

A4f. REPRINTED c1990.
No publisher or date given. 11.75" x 8.25" photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine

clip.

A4g. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow

Red card wraps; 11.25" x 8.25"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with red lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990. Copies also found in pale green wraps with no date.

A4h. REPRINTED 1993 – First Impressions
In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A4i. CD-ROM EDITION 1994 – PDSL, Crowborough, Sussex.

Text included as file MYS01339. in MISCOCCU directory, on 2000 Greater and Lesser Mysteries.

A4j. REPRINTED c1984 – AXIL PRESS, Seattle.

Paper wraps; 8.5" x 5.5". The text only is reprinted.

A4k. REPRINTED. c1990. TOPY SEXT, Austin, Texas.

Grey card wraps; 11" x 8.5".

Omits pp. 37-38 of text, but includes some additional drawings and bookplate designs.

A4l. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1997.

Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

Cream card wraps; 11.75" x 8.25". 300 numbered copies.

A4m. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Der Brennpunkt des Lebens translated by Michael De Witt published as part of
Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 187-249.

A4n. REPRINTED 2000 – I-H-O BOOKS, Thame.

Reset with additional illustrations and embellishments. Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9".
Issued at £14.99. Includes "In a Lonely Wood, Astray" an introductory essay by Dennis Bardens and Haydn Mackay's review from Form, January 1922.

A small number of copies were produced at the Drupa 2000 Media Week exhibition.
These have an additional preliminary sheet which gives technical details of the equipment and materials used to produce the book.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Anathema of Zos

A5. ANATHEMA OF ZOS

A5. Anathema of Zos, 1927 - flyer and typical aura portrait

A5a. ANATHEMA | OF ZOS | THE SERMON TO THE | HYPOCRITES | An Automatic Writing | by Austin Osman Spare | [illustration]
Frontis and title page vignette.

Deluxe edition: 12" X 9.5"; 22 pages; 50 numbered and signed copies, bound in white vellum and printed on Japanese vellum (the prospectus stated "leather-bound"); price three guineas.

A5b. Ordinary edition (as 5a, but with brown paper wraps). 50 copies, numbered and signed; 11 5" x 9"; hand-made paper; with pictorial end-piece; stiff brown paper cover. Price 6/-.

A5. Anathema of Zos, 1927 - upper cover standard issue

According to the prospectus, the deluxe copies should have a special bookplate of a pencil and a crayon "vibratory" portrait. However, vellum bound copies do not always have the bookplate and it is occasionally found in ordinary copies. In the Select Bibliography appended to Kenneth and Steffi Grant's *Zos Speaks!*, Robert Ansell discusses how copies can be found in either light brown or dark brown wraps. He suggests that the copies in the darker wraps may represent unbound copies of the deluxe edition. Ansell also describes an issue "sewn without wrappers".

A5c. REPRINTED 1973 – within AGAPE: The Occult Review, Vol. I, No. 4.
8.25" x 6" plain grey paper wraps which separate the publication from the rest of the magazine. With a new introduction by Kenneth Grant.

A5d. REPRINTED 1976 – NEPTUNE PRESS, London.
Plain keaycolour feltmark wraps; 11.5" x 9"; price "7.50.

A5e. MICROFICHE EDITION, c1978 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS.
Sold at "2.

A5f. REPRINTED 1979 – in THE NEW EQUINOX, Vol. 3, pp. 461-467.

A5g. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.
In Collected Works.

A5h. REPRINTED 1985 – BLACK MOON PUBLISHING, Cincinnati.
Grey card wraps; black taped spine; 11" x 8.5". With a new preface by Louis Martin".

A5i. REPRINTED 1987 – SUT ANUBIS, Northampton.

White card wraps; 8.75" x 6.25"; 500 copies.

A5j. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow

Grey card Wraps; 10" x 7"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with brown lettering, but is still dated 1990.

A5k. REPRINTED 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.

In From the Inferno to Zos .

A5l. REPRINTED 1993 – in THE FENRIS WOLF, No. 3, pp. 106-114.

The text only is reprinted.

A5m. CD-ROM EDITION 1994 – PDSL, Crowborough, Sussex.

Text included as file MYS01171 in MAGIC directory, on 2000 Greater and Lesser Mysteries.

A5n. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1988 – EDITRICE ATANOR, Rome.

Translated, with additional material, by Luciano Pirrotta.

Laminated card wraps; 8.5" x 5"; 1000 numbered copies. With an appendix of five drawings from A Book of Automatic Drawings.

A5o*. GREEK TRANSLATION.

In preparation by O T M T I T of Larisa, Greece.

A5p. CZECH TRANSLATION 1995 – REVUE HORUS 1\95, pp. 56-69.

The text only is reprinted.

A5q. REPRINTED 1996 – in REBELS & DEVILS, NEW FALCON PUBLICATIONS, Tucson. The text only is reprinted.

A5r. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1991.

Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

Cream card wraps; 9.5" X 6.75"; 111 numbered copies. Note: A "2nd edition re-typeset" was announced by 93 Publishing (c1979) but never appeared.

A5s. FRENCH TRANSLATION c 1990 [LA SOCIETE AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE DU QUEBEC, Quebec]. L'Anathème de Zos translated by S.Zimmermann.

Pink papers wraps 8" x 5 7/8". The "societe" is referred to by the French distributor of a recent samizdat edition, but is otherwise unknown.

A5t. POLISH TRANSLATION 1988 – in OKULTURA 0, pp 46-54.

Klatwa Zosa translated by Eimi Kion. The text only is reprinted.

A5u. REPRINTED 1989 – in RANTS AND INCENDIARY TRACTS edited by Bob Black

& Adam Parfrey, Amok Press, pp 96-104.

A5v. REPRINTED c 1990 – TOPY (CHAOS), AUSTRALIA
Red paper wraps 8" x 5 7/8".

A5w. REPRINTED 2000 – RAYNARD ARCANIUM PRESS
15" x 9". The prospectus announced – ‘limited subscribers’ edition of 180 numbered copies handbound in black Japanese mohair bookcloth using traditional Japanese binding methods” at \$22. Also 22 deluxe copies to be bound in Goat Skin Vellum. It is thought that comparatively few copies were actually issued.

A5x. REPRINTED 2001 – I-H-O Books, Thame
Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9" Reset with many additional illustrations.

A5y. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Das Anathema des Zos translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 271-292.

A5aa. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Das Anathema des Zos translated by Michael De Witt, see “Thanateros” in Section F.

A5ab. REPRINTED 2001 – BLAKKSTARR PRESS
As part of Automatism, A collection of writings and drawings by Austin Osman Spare. Subscribers edition of 75 numbered copies 11" x 18", handbound decorative paper covered boards. Some copies issued in cloth covered boards, with matching wraparound outer cover.

A5ac. ITALIAN TRANSLATION 2001
Privately published Calcinaia, Italy October 2001. Translated and introduced by Roberto Migliussi, preface by Kenneth Grant. Buff card wraps 15 cm x 21 cm 200 numbered copies.

A5ad. SPANISH TRANSLATION
Anatema de Zos published on the internet. Just the text is reproduced.

A5ae. FRENCH TRANSLATION
L’Anatheme de Zos translated by Philippe Pissier published on the internet.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Earth Inferno

A1. EARTH INFERNO

A1. Earth Inferno, 1905 - title page

A1a. EARTH | I·N·F·E·R·N·O AUSTIN O. SPARE | (On front cover which serves as title).

Normally, brown paper wraps; 17.75" x 13.5"; 30 pp. 1905. 265 numbered and signed copies. Foreword by C.H.L. Eleven illustrations and many decorations by Spare.

The book was announced under the title EARTH for publication at the end of February, 1905 in an edition of 265 numbered and signed copies. Two hundred copies were supposed to be bound in thick paper covers at 2/6; fifty to be bound in "strong vellum boards" containing one colour plate at 5/- and fifteen were to be printed on hand-made paper, bound in "vellum covers" including six hand-coloured illustrations at £1-1s.

A1. Earth Inferno, 1905 - upper cover

Most copies seen have printed paper wraps – presumably the 2/6 edition. Some copies have been seen in printed vellum boards (although with no colour plate). These copies, presumably, represent the 5/- edition. Sotheby's sale of 21 November, 1995 included a copy in "original [unprinted] vellum with a fine contemporary watercolour drawing by Spare" which may well be the £1-1-0 edition.

Copies are also occasionally found in printed green boards.

In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at 10/6.

A1b. REPRINTED 1976 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS.

Brown imitation cloth casing; 12.75" x 10"; 200 copies at £14.75. The extensive dust-wrapper notes effectively constitute a new introduction. Also issued on microfiche at £2.00.

A1c. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.
In Collected Works [see A8].

A1d. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow.

Red card wraps; 11.25" x 8.25"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with red lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990. Copies also found in pale green wraps with no date.

A1e. REPRINTED c1985 – AXIL PRESS, Seattle.
Parchment effect wraps; 8.5" x 5.5".

A1f. REPRINTED 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.
In, From The Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A1g. REPRINTED c1990.

No publisher or date given; 8.25" x 11.75"; photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine clip.

A1h. REPRINTED c1990. THE DEATH PRESS.

Green card wraps; 8.5" x 5.5" with Synopsis of Inferno diagram on front cover.

Original page numbers and borders deleted, with several pages being reproduced out of sequence.

A1i. ITALIAN EDITION 1999.

Privately printed Livorno, Italy. With a note by the publishers, Roberto Migliussi and Stefano Landi. Cream card wraps 8" x 11" ; 200 numbered copies.

A few copies were issued in black papered boards 8" x 12".

A1j. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Inferno Erde translated by Michael De Witt published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 27-54.

A1k. POLISH TRANSLATION

Piekło na Ziemi translated and with an introduction by Krzysztof Azarewicz has been announced by Lashtal Press.

DVD Earth Inferno

A short film inspired by Spare's first book was released on DVD by Fulgur Limited. The film was produced in Argentina by Mor Navon and Julian Moguillansky.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

A Book of Satyrs

A2. A BOOK OF SATYRS

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - title page

A2a. A BOOK OF | SATYRS | BY AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE | [design] | Co-operative Printing Society Ltd., 1907. 300 signed and numbered copies. Vellum backed grey boards; 17.5" x 13".

A few copies were apparently issued with loose pages, in grey boards with green ties.

Eleven full page drawings and many small decorations.

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - upper cover, issue with without ties

The "signed and numbered original edition, Artist's Bookplate" was advertised in the

1916 Form at 30/-. This had increased to Two Guineas in the 1921 Form.

A2b. A BOOK OF | SATYRS | BY AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE | [design] | London: John Lane, The Bodley Head | New York: John Lane Company, 1909. 300 copies.
Vellum backed; green boards; 17.5" x 13".

This edition had an additional illustration "Pleasure", the introduction by James Guthrie was re-set to cover one and a half pages and some vignettes re-arranged.

In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at One Guinea.

A2c. REPRINTED (2b.) 1979 – 93 PUBLISHING, Quebec.
Green cartridge paper wraps, 17.5" x 13".

A2. A Book of Satyrs, 1907 - upper cover, issue with ties

A2d. REPRINTED (2a.) 1979 – [as illustrations to SSOTBME].
Nigel Grey-Turner. 9" x 6"; laminated wraps which reproduce "The Blas' Bacchante" from The Golden Hind, Vol. 2, No. 5.

A2e. REPRINTED (2b.) 1989 – VENUS, London.
Numbered limited edition of illustrations reproduced on postcards; together with Spare's introduction [abridged] in a plastic sleeve.

A2f. REPRINTED (2b.) c1990.
No publisher or date given. 11.75" x 8.25"; photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine clip.

A2g. REPRINTED (2a.) 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow.
Pale green card wraps; 11.5" x 8"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with green lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990.

A2h. REPRINTED (2a.) 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.
In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A2i. ITALIAN TRANSLATION. (2b.) 1997 – BELFORTE GRAFICA, Livorno.
Translated, with additional material, Roberto Migliussi.
Cream card wraps; 13" x 9.5"; 400 numbered copies.

A2j. REPRINTED. (2b.) c1990.
No publisher or date given. Yellow cards wraps 11.75" x 8.25". Reset limitation statement – "Five Hundred Copies of this Work have been printed."

A2k. FRENCH TRANSLATION (2b) c1990 – LES PRESSES DE BABALON , Quebec.
Un Livre de Satyres , buff card wraps 8" x 11". Guthrie's introduction is not included.

A2l. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990

Das Buch der Satyrn translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 55-84.

A2m. REPRINTED (2b) 2001 – BLAKKSTARR PRESS

As part of Automatism – A collection of writings and drawings by Austin Osman Spare. Subscribers edition of 75 numbered copies 11" x 18" handbound decorative paper covered boards. Some copies issued in cloth covered boards, with matching wraparound outer cover.

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The Book of Pleasure
A3. THE BOOK OF PLEASURE (SELF LOVE)
A3. The Book of Pleasure, 1913 - title page

A3a. THE BOOK OF PLEASURE (SELF LOVE). | THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY. | 1909- 1913 | [illustration] | LONDON: | Printed by the Co-operative Printing Society Limited, Tudor Street, E.C. | Published by the Author, 8b, Golders Green Parade, N.W. | [short rule] | 1913.
Bound in black cloth, lettered in white on front board - THE | BOOK OF PLEASURE | (SELF-LOVE) | THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ECSTASY | AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE.

Nine full page half-tone illustrations and numerous drawings and symbols.

800 Copies[?]. In 1916 the book was advertised in Form at 10/6. 4+60 pp. 15.5" x 10.5".

A3. The Book of Pleasure, 1913 - upper cover standard edition

A number of copies were bound in vellum. In 1916, these were described as "Signed. Artist's Bookplate" and offered by The Morland Press at 30/-. The bookplate has led a number of dealers to catalogue such copies as "author's own copy" and to price accordingly. Some vellum bound copies do not have the bookplate.

A3b. REPRINTED 1975 - 93 PUBLISHING, Quebec.
Black cloth; 15.25" x 10.25"; dustwrapper reproduces "The Death Posture".
With a new foreword by Kenneth Grant; 1000 numbered copies.
Originally sold at \$44 but later reduced to \$25.

A3c. REPRINTED 1977 - MORTON PRESS.
White wraps; printed blue; 11.75" x 8.25"; 100 copies. This impression is evidently the

basis of a later reprint found with yellow card covers, being held together with industrial staples.

A3d. MICROFICHE EDITION, c1978 - ASKIN PUBLISHERS.
Issued at £2.

A3e. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 - SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.
In Collected Works [see A8].

A3f. REPRINTED 1987 - SUT ANUBIS.
Black card wraps, lettered in white. 11.75" x 8.25".

A3g. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 - BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS,
Glasgow
Red card wraps, 11.5" x 8", 200 copies.

A3h. REPRINTED 1993 - FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.
In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A3i. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1993 - ALL'INSEGNA DI ISHTAR, Torino.
Translated by Caterina Porcheddu. Introduction by Dario Spada (merely a translation of Robert Ansell's essay from The Bookplate Designs of Austin Osman Spare).
Laminated card wraps; 9.5" x 6.5"; 666 numbered copies together with 50 copies hors commerce.

A3j(*). A new edition with footnotes on Spare's magical techniques has been announced by Fulgur, although it is understood that publication is not imminent.

A3k. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Das Buch der Freude translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 85-186.

A3l. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1996
Das Buch der Ekstatischen Freude translated and with an introduction by Marcus M.Jungkurth. Published by Kersken-Canbaz Verlag, laminated card wraps 5" x 8".

A3m. REPRINTED 2003 - I-H-O BOOKS, Thame.
A reset edition as part of Ethos, pp 27-150. Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9".

A3n. FRENCH TRANSLATION
Le Livre du Plaisir translated by Jean-Luc Colnot and Philippe Pissier published on the internet.

A3o. POLISH TRANSLATION
Ksiega Rozkoszy translated by Krzysztof Azarewicz with an introduction by Gavin W.Semple, has been announced by Okultura.

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The Focus of Life
A4. THE FOCUS OF LIFE
A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - title page

A4a. The Focus of Life: The Mutterings of AOS: | written and illustrated by Austin Osman Spare. | Edited by Frederick Carter with an introduction | by Francis Marsden. | [illustration] | Printed and Published by the Morland Press | Ltd., 190 Ebury Street, London SW1 MCMXXI
Frontis, title vignette and 11 full page illustrations. Quarter vellum with buckram sides, t.e.g., lettered in gold on the spine "THE FOCUS OF LIFE". 12.5" x 10"; 6+44 pp. 50 copies, numbered and signed on the half-title. This edition deluxe was sold for Two Guineas.

Later issues have a slip pasted over the third and fourth lines of the title page reading "With an introduction by Francis Marsden".

A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - upper cover deluxe issue

A4b. As 4a. Brown papered boards and white buckram spine lettered in black "THE FOCUS OF LIFE". 600 copies. This was described as a "limited edition" (and elsewhere as the ordinary edition) and sold for one guinea.

A4c. REPRINTED 1976 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS
Blue imitation cloth casing, 12.75" x 10", 500 copies at £12.75. With a new introduction by Stephen Skinner.
Also sold as a microfiche at £2.

A4d. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds
In Collected Works [see A8].

A4e. REPRINTED 1990 – (AS NOW FOR REALITY) MANDRAKE PRESS LTD.,
Thame.
11.75" x 8.25" with nine poems by Aleister Crowley to accompany the plates and an essay by Keith Richmond. One thousand numbered copies.

A4. The Focus of Life, 1921 - upper cover standard issue

A4f. REPRINTED c1990.
No publisher or date given. 11.75" x 8.25" photocopies in buff wraps with plastic spine clip.

A4g. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow

Red card wraps; 11.25" x 8.25"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with red lettering, etc. but is still dated 1990. Copies also found in pale green wraps with no date.

A4h. REPRINTED 1993 – First Impressions
In From the Inferno to Zos [See A11].

A4i. CD-ROM EDITION 1994 – PDSL, Crowborough, Sussex.
Text included as file MYS01339. in MISCOCCU directory, on 2000 Greater and Lesser Mysteries.

A4j. REPRINTED c1984 – AXIL PRESS, Seattle.
Paper wraps; 8.5" x 5.5". The text only is reprinted.

A4k. REPRINTED. c1990. TOPY SEXT, Austin, Texas.
Grey card wraps; 11" x 8.5".

Omits pp. 37-38 of text, but includes some additional drawings and bookplate designs.

A4l. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1997.
Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

Cream card wraps; 11.75" x 8.25". 300 numbered copies.

A4m. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Der Brennpunkt des Lebens translated by Michael De Witt published as part of
Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 187-249.

A4n. REPRINTED 2000 – I-H-O BOOKS, Thame.
Reset with additional illustrations and embellishments. Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9".
Issued at £14.99. Includes "In a Lonely Wood, Astray" an introductory essay by Dennis Bardens and Haydn Mackay's review from Form, January 1922.

A small number of copies were produced at the Drupa 2000 Media Week exhibition.
These have an additional preliminary sheet which gives technical details of the
equipment and materials used to produce the book.

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Anathema of Zos

A5. ANATHEMA OF ZOS

A5. Anathema of Zos, 1927 - flyer and typical aura portrait

A5a. ANATHEMA | OF ZOS | THE SERMON TO THE | HYPOCRITES | An Automatic Writing | by Austin Osman Spare | [illustration]
Frontis and title page vignette.

Deluxe edition: 12" X 9.5"; 22 pages; 50 numbered and signed copies, bound in white vellum and printed on Japanese vellum (the prospectus stated "leather-bound"); price three guineas.

A5b. Ordinary edition (as 5a, but with brown paper wraps). 50 copies, numbered and signed; 11 5" x 9"; hand-made paper; with pictorial end-piece; stiff brown paper cover. Price 6/-.

A5. Anathema of Zos, 1927 - upper cover standard issue

According to the prospectus, the deluxe copies should have a special bookplate of a pencil and a crayon "vibratory" portrait. However, vellum bound copies do not always have the bookplate and it is occasionally found in ordinary copies. In the Select Bibliography appended to Kenneth and Steffi Grant's *Zos Speaks!*, Robert Ansell discusses how copies can be found in either light brown or dark brown wraps. He suggests that the copies in the darker wraps may represent unbound copies of the deluxe edition. Ansell also describes an issue "sewn without wrappers".

A5c. REPRINTED 1973 – within AGAPE: The Occult Review, Vol. I, No. 4.
8.25" x 6" plain grey paper wraps which separate the publication from the rest of the magazine. With a new introduction by Kenneth Grant.

A5d. REPRINTED 1976 – NEPTUNE PRESS, London.
Plain keaycolour feltmark wraps; 11.5" x 9"; price "7.50.

A5e. MICROFICHE EDITION, c1978 – ASKIN PUBLISHERS.
Sold at "2.

A5f. REPRINTED 1979 – in THE NEW EQUINOX, Vol. 3, pp. 461-467.

A5g. REPRINTED 1982 & 1986 – SORCERER'S APPRENTICE, Leeds.
In Collected Works.

A5h. REPRINTED 1985 – BLACK MOON PUBLISHING, Cincinnati.
Grey card wraps; black taped spine; 11" x 8.5". With a new preface by Louis Martin".

A5i. REPRINTED 1987 – SUT ANUBIS, Northampton.
White card wraps; 8.75" x 6.25"; 500 copies.

A5j. REPRINTED 1990 & 1993 – BEYOND THE RISING SUN PUBLICATIONS, Glasgow
Grey card Wraps; 10" x 7"; 200 copies. The 1993 impression has grey wraps with brown lettering, but is still dated 1990.

A5k. REPRINTED 1993 – FIRST IMPRESSIONS, Seattle.
In From the Inferno to Zos .

A5l. REPRINTED 1993 – in THE FENRIS WOLF, No. 3, pp. 106-114.
The text only is reprinted.

A5m. CD-ROM EDITION 1994 – PDSL, Crowborough, Sussex.
Text included as file MYS01171 in MAGIC directory, on 2000 Greater and Lesser Mysteries.

A5n. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1988 – EDITRICE ATANOR, Rome.
Translated, with additional material, by Luciano Pirrotta.

Laminated card wraps; 8.5" x 5"; 1000 numbered copies. With an appendix of five drawings from A Book of Automatic Drawings.

A5o*. GREEK TRANSLATION.
In preparation by O T M T I T of Larisa, Greece.

A5p. CZECH TRANSLATION 1995 – REVUE HORUS 1\95, pp. 56-69.
The text only is reprinted.

A5q. REPRINTED 1996 – in REBELS & DEVILS, NEW FALCON PUBLICATIONS, Tucson. The text only is reprinted.

A5r. ITALIAN TRANSLATION, 1991.
Translated by Roberto Migliussi.
Cream card wraps; 9.5" X 6.75"; 111 numbered copies. Note: A "2nd edition re-typeset" was announced by 93 Publishing (c1979) but never appeared.

A5s. FRENCH TRANSLATION c 1990 [LA SOCIETE AUSTIN OSMAN SPARE DU QUEBEC, Quebec]. L'Anathame de Zos translated by S.Zimmermann.
Pink papers wraps 8" x 5 7/8". The "societe" is referred to by the French distributor of a recent samizdat edition, but is otherwise unknown.

A5t. POLISH TRANSLATION 1988 – in OKULTURA 0, pp 46-54.
Klatwa Zosa translated by Eimi Kion. The text only is reprinted.

A5u. REPRINTED 1989 – in RANTS AND INCENDIARY TRACTS edited by Bob Black & Adam Parfrey, Amok Press, pp 96-104.

A5v. REPRINTED c 1990 – TOPY (CHAOS), AUSTRALIA
Red paper wraps 8" x 5 7/8".

A5w. REPRINTED 2000 – RAYNARD ARCANIUM PRESS
15" x 9". The prospectus announced – ‘limited subscribers’ edition of 180 numbered copies handbound in black Japanese mohair bookcloth using traditional Japanese binding methods” at \$22. Also 22 deluxe copies to be bound in Goat Skin Vellum. It is thought that comparatively few copies were actually issued.

A5x. REPRINTED 2001 – I-H-O Books, Thame
Printed, buff card wraps 7" x 9" Reset with many additional illustrations.

A5y. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Das Anathema des Zos translated by Michael De Witt, published as part of Gesammelte Werke [See A8c] pp 271-292.

A5aa. GERMAN TRANSLATION 1990
Das Anathema des Zos translated by Michael De Witt, see “Thanateros” in Section F.

A5ab. REPRINTED 2001 – BLAKKSTARR PRESS
As part of Automatism, A collection of writings and drawings by Austin Osman Spare. Subscribers edition of 75 numbered copies 11" x 18", handbound decorative paper covered boards. Some copies issued in cloth covered boards, with matching wraparound outer cover.

A5ac. ITALIAN TRANSLATION 2001
Privately published Calcinaia, Italy October 2001. Translated and introduced by Roberto Migliussi, preface by Kenneth Grant. Buff card wraps 15 cm x 21 cm 200 numbered copies.

A5ad. SPANISH TRANSLATION
Anatema de Zos published on the internet. Just the text is reproduced.

A5ae. FRENCH TRANSLATION
L’Anatheme de Zos translated by Philippe Pissier published on the internet.

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This and That
Sightings of Spare in Contemporary Culture

Bulldog Breed, Made in England (1969)
Bulldog Breed - Made in England, 1969. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

Audio clip: Adobe Flash Player (version 9 or above) is required to play this audio clip. Download the latest version here. You also need to have JavaScript enabled in your browser.

There are very few instances of Spare's work influencing musicians before 1970, but Bulldog Breed was one such example. Released in 1969 by Decca, the album is now a rarity. In a post on the Fulgur Yahoo Group (now closed) musician Rod Taylor described how he came to include a track on the artist:

"Well you certainly hit on a rare one there! As a matter of interest "Austin Osman Spare" was an acquaintance of my Grandmother. She had been friendly with Austin and had been given many of his works! Before Gran came to London she had been a tutor at Bristol University (Piano and Art) My Mother also became interested in his Art as she herself was an artist. I recall that she worked just up the hill from Brixton at a place called Skolniks – they were involved in commercial artwork somewhere around "Streatham high" as it was called then! Not too far from where Austin used to live! "My Mother and I went over to Ilford to see an Auntie of mine and as a child I was introduced to a world of Canvasses and painting – mainly Austin's. This was shortly before my Mother had a very bad breakdown. I suppose I would have been about seven years old at the time. Everyone in my family was a bit artistic and even now I do the odd portrait or watercolour. I inherited a lot of prints and sketches of Austin's work, but with the passage of time they were lost (I think I left them in a bedsit in Ilford just round from the Bus station, 1969!) This was at a time when Bulldog were merging with T2! Keith Cross had turned up on the scene, most of my equipment had been stolen and I suffered a setback financially (as musicians do). I did a runner 'cos I couldn't pay the rent! "Austin lived in or around the Brixton area and was a good wartime painter but in later years I believe he suffered very badly with illness losing his limbs (gangrene) and dying somewhere about 1956. He had a belief that art should be within the reach of the common man. As to his involvement of the occult I really don't know too much about that- that was just how the lyric panned out. "I suppose you could say that he was a little influenced by William Blake and I am not too sure of his relationship with Crowley! "I was sharing a flat with a friend of mine just off Wanstead High Street and Bernie Jinks, Robin Hunt (whose family lived round the corner – Nightingale lane) and numerous young ladies would come round for a bit of music practice! These two guys were always the ones with women in tow! I think that Robin, Bernie and I were sitting around on one such afternoon and since the pressure was on to write some material for the LP, for

some reason Austin's name cropped up and we all worked it out from there! It was probably the introduction of the Artwork that inspired Robin to work on the Lyric! I had already got some idea of a Guitar part and with Bernie's' input the song came together in a very short time!"

Thanks to Philip Legard for this information.

BUY IT HERE

Coil (1982-2004)

Coil were a cross-genre, experimental music group who worked in such forms as industrial, noise, ambient and dark ambient, neo-folk, spoken word, drone music, and minimalism.

COIL

Formed by John Balance (sometimes credited as Jhonn Balance) and Throbbing Gristle and Industrial Records co-founder Peter Christopherson (aka 'Sleazy') when both left Psychic TV. Influenced greatly by the art and writings of Austin Osman Spare, Coil originally performed live as Zos Kia and on another early recording as the Sickness of Snakes. Over time, Coil's line-up has included Stephen Thrower, Rose McDowall, Drew McDowall, Danny Hyde, William Breeze, Thighpaulsandra (of Julian Cope band and Spiritualized) CoH and Ossian Brown (Cyclobe) with live contributions from Cliff Stapleton, Tom Edwards, and Mike York. In 2005 Peter Christopherson announced on the groups' record-label website, Threshold House that Coil as an entity ended with the death of its founding member, Jhonn Balance. Jhonn remained a passionate and dedicated supporter of Spare's work and through the music of COIL the artist was introduced to a new generation.

Edited extract courtesy of Wikipedia

Threshold House

Fortean Times Article

(W)Holesome Products Inc., Phantom Investigators (2002)

Phantom Investigators was a 13 half-hour episode children's series, commissioned by the Kids! WB channel (Warner Bros) and produced in San Francisco by my production company (W)Holesome Products Inc. The series was created by myself and co-directed with my partner Josephine Huang. The series began airing in May 2002 in the US but only lasted one season. We managed to get some rave reviews however (LA Times called it: "This wildly inventive treat...some of the most wonderfully inventive animation to hit the small screen in a long time.") The series was distributed globally by Sony and aired for the following 18 months in: Australia, Canada, Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Ireland, New Zealand, Korea, but was never picked up by any of the UK channels (much to my dismay).

A wholesome AOS... Image copyright © Stephen Holman

The premise was that a supernatural world does exist along side our own, affecting the events in mortal's lives for good and bad. Children are more open to this reality than most adults and know that when they hear mysterious sounds coming from the basement it's time to call the 'Phantom Investigators' (four psychically powered children who run an after-school investigation/assistance service for kids trying to cope with supernatural crises in their lives).

The show used an unusual blend of stop-motion (puppet) animation, sophisticated live puppetry and live action (used for some of the human ghosts as you can see in the frat boy still). Stop motion has a long history in the SF area – Tim Burton's animated films were made here (Josephine animated on Nightmare and Peach) – but we ended up having to pull in animators and model builders from all over the country for our 100 person team. During production (which took 18 months) there were 26 shooting stages permanently in operation.

A wholesome AOS... Image copyright © Stephen Holman

The episode secretly guest-starring AOS was entitled "Omega Pizza Pi" and involved a closed-down frat house haunted by the spirits of former members of the fraternity who were being forced to submit to humiliating hazing rituals by a demon named Mozzarethulu (whose body was made of rotting cheese – it's a complicated story). AOS's portrait hung on the wall in the hallway and was featured in the background of about ten different shots throughout the episode.

Many thanks to Stephen Holman of (W)Holesome Products Inc. for providing this information and the images.

(W)holesome Products Inc.

A Psychogeographical Guide to Spare's London (2006)

First appearing to the world on the web-media mecca YouTube, amateur film-maker Jamie Gregory has this to say about his evocative visual tour of Spare's city:

The genesis of the 'Spare Places' project had two main causes at the time and myriad auxiliary conditions; the causes being a wish to commemorate the fiftieth year of the death of Austin Spare, artist and psychic, plus the discovery that my new digital camera had a video function. The decision to take a psychogeographical slant to the film was the result of a growing personal interest in how the spirit of place (genius loci), affects the people and activities which take place within the area. The assumption is made that echoes of that spirit can be found in the associations connected to a place, its name, its history its legends and mythologies. As one psychogeographer remarked such investigations reveal a deep topography, in the case of London, quite literally 'under the feet.'

The film project took this matter in reverse, by concentrating on the life of a man who moved about quite a bit to see what resonated between man and place. By simply visiting and filming randomly and later researching the area and noting associations with symbols captured on camera these affinities were revealed. The karma of animals which still pervades Smithfields, Spare's birth place, the Cock Lane ghost and early spiritualist phenomena, his apprenticeship to stained glass production within a stone's throw of a church dedicated to the patron saint of that profession. Of course such things prove nothing as tens of thousands were also born and raised in such places with no discernable effects upon them but this is not science – rather imagination.

It is the power of that imagination to create worlds between the facts which, if effects are any measure of reality, must therefore be just as real. There is no doubt that Spare's vision of eldritch worlds and astral zones evokes a movement within the hearts of men and women both past and present, and if the increasing interest is anything to go by – into the future as well.

Thanks to Jamie Gregory for proving this information and the movies.

An Interview with Austin Spare (2009)
A new psycho-geographical odyssey!

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Barry Hale: Building a bridge between the metaphysical and the postmodern traditions in contemporary art.
by Christopher Dean

Early on in the history of Modernism a line was drawn that separated secular art from spiritual art. In spite of this division a significant number of artists continue to produce work that is associated with spirituality, mysticism and the metaphysical. Since the 1980's a number of major exhibitions have acknowledged the importance of this tradition in contemporary art. Barry Hale's work is not unlike the position that is occupied by "alternative" or "complimentary" practices in medicine and science. Central to Hale's practice is a will considered and well researched visual epistemology. Hale has pieced together an artistic style that combines a sensual immediacy with and abstract reflection. This approach has been systematized by the artist into a comprehensive and syncretic working method. An important feature of Hale's art practice is that it doesn't entirely depend upon orthodoxies or hierarchies of the accepted canon of Western art history. In this way Hale has had the courage to take a truly independent path. However, within Hale's work there are two tangible connections to mainstream art movements of the twentieth century: the first is Surrealism and the second is Pop Art. Hale's specific link to Surrealism is through the paintings and drawings of Andre Masson. Masson developed insights into the relationship between myth, the imagination and differences being that Andy Warhol was interested in depicting earthly divinities such as "superstars" while Hale's subject matter is concerned with the depiction of transcendental divinities such as "gods". As a result Hale created a new style of art that could be classified as "Afterlife Pop". From this position it would be fair to suggest that if Andy Warhol is still making art in the afterlife then it would probably resemble Barry Hale's.

Hale's other influences are far less traditional for the most part, remain off limits to the conventions and orthodoxies that are to be found with the world of contemporary art. These influences include religious art from China, Tibet, India, medieval European folk, ritualistic art from Mexico and Haiti, south pacific and Melanesian tribal art, as well as Western occult and hermetic traditions from the nineteenth and twentieth century including artists such as Austin Osman Spare. Spare's influence on Hale is through his series of drawings and paintings known as "atavistic portraits" curiously, the powerful iconography of these traditions has not been widely appropriated by contemporary artists and remains largely a feature of popular culture. What Hale shares with many of the designers of popular culture is an interest in the secret iconography of tarot cards,

video games, tattoo designs and pop music graphics. When a contemporary artist appropriates an occult image it is usually for sensational rather than scholarly reasons. Rather than treating these traditions in a superficial way, Hale works from the position of a scholar. A genuine and scholarly commitment to occult traditions is what sets Hale's work apart from many of his contemporaries.

At present Hale's work can be divided up into three main areas of investigation. These include paintings, drawings and paper cuts. The most recent paintings on average 1.8 metres in height and 1.3 metres in width and are produced using thin layers of brightly coloured acrylic on stretch canvases. The imagery contained within these paintings includes depictions of a wide selection of mythical divinities, demons and angels. These images have been selected from the artist's detailed knowledge of occult lore. The architecture of these paintings form a symmetrical composition that is offset by an infinite variety of asymmetrical details. At the centre of these works is a prominent circle wheel that acts as both a metaphor for the cycles of time and changes, and as a formal device from which the disintegrating and collapsing narratives of the paintings are fixed. The exuberance, intensity and abundance contained within these paintings generates a picture plane that provides the viewer with an enhanced or supersensory field of clear vision.

In contrast to the paintings the drawings have a completely different feel. Instead, being constructed as a self-contained ideological system, they reveal traces of an intimate and fleeting experience. These works capture the momentary and the contingent and their technique resembles what the Surrealist called "automatic drawings". The imagery of these drawings reflect the shape or a form trapped within a thin column of smoke, or an anthropomorphic figure captured in a cloud, or a silhouette caught for a split second in a cowboy's lariat. Hale produces many of these small drawings in a relatively short period of time and refers to them as "peripheral specters" or "scribblings in ectoplasm." These works reveal the musings of a private world and depict the fantasy and eroticism of a daydream that every now and again has the potential to become a nightmare. The third component of Hale's art practise are the paper cuts. These works are cut out of thin black cardboard and usually depict a single figure or a demon or an angel.

The paper cuts portray Hale's cosmology at its most pure because the figures that have been cut out of the cardboard exist only in negative space. In these works the void becomes substance. Through his comprehensive working method Hale has been able to bring together all of these apparently disparent techniques of art making to a well-developed and well-considered visual system that has the power to communicate the experience of a revelation. With the use of a comprehensive and syncretic working method. Hale has produced an extensive body of "iconoclastic icons" that bridge the gap between the metaphysical, the alternative and the postmodern traditions of contemporary art.

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NOKO
by Scott Barnes

NOKO is the performative aspect of Barry William Hale's various lines of esoteric research, involving long standing collaborations, erupting the contents into what is traditionally a fine arts arena. The merging of actual magical ritual work with contemporary experimental sound and visual forms highly original assemblages in a live multi-media format.

This project while varied in associated personnel has produced an extensive and consistent catalogue of residue, documenting the history of work practise since 93.

Although the Enochian Magical system has been a prominent focus, other directions include; A Sonic Magical investigation of the Qlipotic genii, as well as the conjuration of Beelzebub.

Current collaborators include Barry William Hale, long standing member Scott Barnes (sound realization) and the return of Michael Strum (Visualist).

NOKO is a structured improvisational space where sonic texture is a menstruum taking cues from the ritual content – like a fungal mycelium, visible fruiting bodies may occur, and this is where the residue is available to an audience either in a live or recorded format. There is nothing “new” about the format employed by this collaboration, conversely NOKO taps into what can be considered to be some of the oldest traditions regarding the use of the voice, instruments and performance. If we see technology as a continuum then there is total equivalence given to ancillary devices other than voice and percussive sounds generated by the body alone (a literal definition of cybernetics).

A NOKO working is not a definitive form but an example or “instance” of its (re)presentation, like a group performing a standard, there is predefined structure but also interpretation of the work. The group being a kind of lens that will always be varied but can never be transparent or neutral to the content.

Through enacting and addressing the same problems repetitively, style is forged – the phase space of possibility is filled out and made visible a little more at a time. The articulation of NOKO performative space can also accurately be seen as Hale “demonstrating” the development of a particular structural toolset with the backing of his

choosing where I am external to the outcomes other than in a formalist or aesthetic sense. I tend to see all forms of creative expression as variation on the same lateral problem solving skillset, whether a painting, writing, programming etc. just as an artist may never tire of a repetitive practice involving life drawing, for me the opportunity to work with Hale and NOKO, is always fresh and exciting.

NOKO 013 SCOTT BARNES

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Aesthetics of Splendour: Artist Profile – Barry William Hale
Interview for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation, conducted by Sam Doust.

In this self-portrait we look at the work of Barry Hale, an artist exploring magical visions that merge Occident and Orient.

How do you live?
Day by day.

Where do you live?
Newtown, Sydney

How often do you work and for how long?
It's hard for me not to work. I draw all the time, on scraps of paper, serviettes, anything that's around. If I visit a friend often later they tell me I've drawn on their bills, letters and even in their diaries.

Why do you do it at all?
I don't do it – something else does; I'm compelled to.

What are you working on now?
I'm busy this month organising upcoming exhibitions for this year and next, in London, Sydney, Melbourne and LA. I'm also working on a book with Jack Sargent. It's hard for

me not to work. I draw all the time, on scraps of paper, serviettes, anything that's around.

Do you suffer for your art?

I never suffer for my art; though external factors can be trying. For example some people might think I have made considerable lifestyle sacrifices.

Do you have any money?

No. But I never lack.

Who will you be when you are seventy?

A content, vital, active, artistic old man.

If you love beauty will you suffer less?

This is a philosophical question because it implies there is beauty; and this is an entry into judgement, absolutism. Perhaps you will suffer less if you have less fixed notions of beauty. Though I do question the notion of suffering as an underlying principal of life.

Is your work beautiful?

In my work I like to use aesthetics in which there is splendour but not necessarily classical (cultural) beauty.

Is there such a thing as a truly blank canvas?

No, only a vibrant potential.

What do you dream about?

The other night I dreamt I was in a mansion where the stairways and rooms were continually changing. The walls were scarlet with gold trimmings. I was bit lost. I said to myself I needed a guide, at which point a small well dressed man appeared and he asked me, telepathically, do you want to meet your angel. I was unsure about whether I did, but I said maybe. He took me into a dark room, and I was aware there was a person there I couldn't see. Then I went to another part of the house where there was a food market with plenty of exotic food, and I ate lots of delicious food.

What is the point?

I think it's a kind of transmission. For me personally, I have an idea, I articulate it, it comes to some resolution and then I let it go. Letting it go, for example in an exhibition, creates a new vacuum into which new ideas flood. It's a continuum.

Will you make a difference?

I personally believe the death of the imagination occurred with the Reformation. I suppose I aim to revivify imagination in my own way.

What is the best thing about being an artist?

It's fun; it's exciting; it's inspiring.

What is the worst?

Your obsession eclipses everything else.

Are you a pretentious buffoon?

Is this a trick question?

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Kenneth & Steffi Grant

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Kenneth Grant (b.1924, Essex) is the head of several important Thelemic orders and author of the influential "Typhonian Trilogies" series (1972-2002) that includes The Magical Revival, Nightside of Eden and Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God.

In 1939, Kenneth Grant chanced upon Crowley's Magick and Theory and Practise and a few years later began a correspondence with the author (see Remembering Aleister Crowley, Skoob Books, 1991) that would lead to him joining the Ordo Templi Orientis. In

1946, he was initiated into the Argentum Astrum and was confirmed as an IX° in the O.T.O.

Shortly after Crowley's death in 1947 Grant met David Curwen. Also member of the O.T.O. Sovereign Sanctuary, a keen alchemist and a student of tantra, Curwen initiated Grant into "a highly recondite formula of the tantric vama marg." This experience further deepened Grant's interest in oriental mysticism and he detailed his work with the Advaita Vedanta in a number of essays for Asian journals in the early 1950s (later published as *At the Feet of the Guru*, Starfire, 2006).

Kenneth & Steffi Grant by AOS. Image Copyright © Fulgur Limited

In 1948, Kenneth Grant's wife Steffi (they were married in 1946) wrote to Austin Osman Spare and the couple began an eight-year friendship with the artist. The bookseller Michael Houghton had already introduced Grant to Spare's opus, *The Book of Pleasure*, and Spare elucidated his theories with letters and enclosures of manuscripts, with Kenneth acting as amanuensis. In 1954, Spare and Grant co-founded the Zos Kia Cultus: not a cult in the objective sense, but a designation given to the creative nexus of personal magical experience (see *Zos Speaks!*, Fulgur, 1999).

In the same year Grant founded the New Isis Lodge, with the intention of providing a conduit for "the influx of cosmic energy from a transplutonic power-zone known to Initiates as Nu-Isis." The group ran until 1962 and various accounts of the experiences of the group may be found throughout the "Typhonian Trilogies".

Coetaneous with the New Isis Lodge, Kenneth and Steffi Grant began work on the Carfax Monographs. This series of ten essays was issued between 1959 and 1963 with the explicit intention to "elucidate the hidden lore of the West according to canons preserved in various esoteric orders and movements of recent times." It was the beginning of a unique 50 year contribution to Thelemic literature and art that spans poetry, biographical works, fact and fiction.

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Articles

Keneth and Steffi Grant. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

The following articles and reviews on Kenneth Grant and his work have appeared over the last decade. The material has been listed in chronological order of appearance.

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'The Stellar Lode' by Kenneth Grant
a review by Peter J. Smith

First published in Skoob Esoterica Anthology, 1995

Till now, English occult author Kenneth Grant has been most widely known amongst Lovecraftian circles for his convoluted exegeses of the magickal philosophies of Aleister Crowley, in such monumental works as *Cults of the Shadow* and *Nightside of Eden*. These intellectually daunting tomes also include many references to Lovecraft's fictional deities, thus classifying them as (admittedly heterodox) additions to the ever-burgeoning canons of the Cthulhu Mythos.

With the publication of *The Stellar Lode* – the first widely available example of the Grant's fictional work – we are presented with an astonishing fait accompli. Namely, that the true heir apparent to Lovecraft's throne as the presiding Master of Weird Fiction is not in fact Stephen King, Ramsey Campbell, Thomas Ligotti, or Clive Barker, but must now be acknowledged as none other than the aforementioned Mr Grant himself!

His short novel, *The Stellar Lode*, was originally written in the mid nineteen fifties, at a time when Grant and a group of like-minded ceremonial magicians ('the Nu-Isis Lodge') were experimenting in actuality with ceremonies and rituals designed to evoke 'extramundane entities' of a truly bizarre nature, bringing them into physical manifestation (see his 1992 study, *Hecate's Fountain*, for detailed descriptions of these workings and their literally incredible results!).

At first glance, Grant's narrative stylings bear all the fruits of his longstanding fascination with Lovecraft, as 'the reluctant prophet' of the revenant cosmic currents of the New Aeon. However, a deeper reading soon displays the influence of a wider literary background, including the Symbolists and Decadents of the fin de siècle, and early exponents of the 'weird' genre including Arthur Machen, Sax Rohmer, Vincent Starrett, Robert Chambers and Oscar Wilde (I am thinking here of *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, in particular). Indeed, on one level, Grant's story could be regarded as an affectionate (and accurate) reconstruction of a very particular narrative form, heavy with decorative and sonorous description, and yet at the same time curiously reserved and archetypically English – the anecdotal prose style of a reminiscent monologue, recounted within the hushed confines of a Gentleman's Club. The tone set is at once

conspiratorial and initiatory, as layer upon layer of dark mystery are peeled away from the scintillant core of the tale.

And yet, there is another dimension to Grant's fiction, and one that sets him wholly apart from his contemporaries in the field of supernatural fiction. This is of course the input derived from his unparalleled knowledge of recondite and obscure arcana from the Mystery Cults of Ancient Egypt, Tantric India and Medieval Europe – and furthermore, from his own personal, first hand experience of the very same occult forces which Lovecraft dimly glimpsed in his dreams and waking reveries, and which underlie and underpin the external, diurnal world which we rather hopefully grace with the term, 'reality'.

In the Forties, Kenneth Grant was the personal assistant and protégé of Crowley, during the Great Beast's final years spent in obscurity in a guest house ('Netherwood') in Hastings. Now, Grant can also be seen as the inheritor of the literary mantle of that other enigmatic figure, whose shadow falls heavily across the twilight landscape of occultism: none other than the reclusive Young Man of Providence himself. And with the imminent publication of further examples of Grant's fiction – including the novels *Against the Light* and *Snakewand*, and his collection of evocatory verse, *Black to Black*, Lovecraftians of all denominations are in for a veritable 'feast of the unknown'!

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Kenneth Grant: Marriage between the West and the East

by Henrik Bogdan

The following text is an edited extract from Henrik Bogdan's essay 'Challenging the Morals of Western Society: The Use of Ritualised Sex in Contemporary Occultism' first published in The Pomegranate 8.2, Equinox Publishing, 2006

In 1949, one of Crowley's former disciples Gerald J. Yorke (1901-1983) published a short article called 'Tantric Hedonism' in The Occult Observer in which it was stated that certain sexual techniques used by Tantric yogis to make an Elixir were known by the O.T.O.:

Tantric yogis who follow this path insist that physical processes are involved. For them semen (bindhu) is the gross form of a subtle essence called ojas which is the White Eagle of the Alchemists. Amrita is not normally present in the human body, but is

produced by the marriage of the White and Red Eagles; yet its production is essential for that sublimation of the subtle body without which the final body of the soul or rather spirit (atma) with God (Atman) is impossible. Two methods are taught for making this Elixir, one by the three oli mudras of the Hathayogins, which are unknown to western tradition, the other in the Kaula circle of the Bhairavi Diksha, when the Suvacini dances naked. This latter technique is known in the west and is the treasured secret of an Hermetic Order known as the O.T.O. (1)

Yorke was not alone in trying to connect the O.T.O. with Hindu Tantra at this time. In fact, one year previously, in 1948, Kenneth Grant had published a Manifesto of the British Branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis in which he claimed that, among other things, the Order promulgated the essential teachings of the Indian Shakta Tantra Shastra:

In the O.T.O. are promulgated the essential teachings of the Draconian Tradition of Ancient Egypt; the teachings of the Indian Shakta Tantra Shastra; the teachings of the pre-Christian Gnosis; the Initiated Western Tradition as enshrined in the mysteries of the Holy Qabalah, and the Alchemical Mystical and Magical Formulae of the Arcane Schools of the agelong past, as well as the mode of applying practically the essential principles underlying the Spagyric or Hermetic Sciences, the Orphic Mysteries and the use of the Ophidian Current. (2)

Aleister Crowley at Netherwood - Image © Copyright Henrik Bogdan, 2007

Grant met Crowley for the first time on 10 December 1944, at a boarding house where Crowley was staying at the time, and he soon became Crowley's secretary as well as a member of the O.T.O. A year after Crowley's death, Grant was formally acknowledged as a Ninth degree member by Karl J. Germer (1885-1962), who had succeeded Crowley as international head of the O.T.O., and on 5 March 1951 Germer issued a charter to Grant to open a camp of the order in London. As the New Isis Lodge was the only chartered O.T.O. body in England at the time, it appears that Grant interpreted the charter as making him the head of the 'Order in Britain', (3) although New Isis Lodge actually 'did not get underway until 1955'. (4) However, on 20 July 1955 Germer formally revoked the charter and expelled Grant from the O.T.O. because of a manifesto that Grant had issued the same year. (5)

The manifesto in question was an eight-page pamphlet entitled Manifesto of New Isis Lodge O.T.O., in which Grant, through his O.T.O. name Frater Aossic IX°, was identified as the Inner Head of the New Isis Lodge and the O.T.O. (British Branch), using the name The Master Nodens X° for this function. Grant apparently thought little of Germer's letter of expulsion and continued to operate the New Isis Lodge until 1962 on the basis of 'inner Plane' powers. (6) It was also at this time that Grant immersed himself in Hindu philosophy and religion, and during the period 1953-1961 he wrote a number of articles on Advaita Vedanta for Indian journals such as The Call Divine, published in Bombay. (7) It appears that at this time Grant became a follower of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), known as the Sage of Arunachala.

Manifesto of the New Isis Lodge - © Copyright Kenneth Grant, 1955

Grant would later become instrumental in the revival of Aleister Crowley through the editing (often together with John Symonds) and introduction of a number of Crowley's books, including *The Confessions of Aleister Crowley* (1969), *The Magical Record of the Beast 666* (1972), *The Diary of a Drug Fiend* (1972), *Moonchild* (1972), *Magick* (1973), *Magical and Philosophical Commentaries on the Book of the Law* (1974), *The Complete Astrological Writings* (1974), and by writing an introduction to *The Heart of the Master* (1973). It was also during this period that Grant began to publish his three so-called Typhonian Trilogies commencing with *The Magical Revival* in 1972, which were completed twenty years later with *The Ninth Arch* (2002). (8) The early seventies also saw the commencement of, what is usually referred to as, the Typhonian O.T.O. under the leadership of Grant, with its first official announcement published around 1973. While the degree system basically was the same as the one used by Crowley, Grant discarded the use of rituals of initiation and instead conferred degrees on the basis of personal development of its members. The development was apparently checked by Grant himself, and it was expected that the members should send him the records or diaries covering their magical practices on a regular basis. As with Crowley, sexual magic was confined to the Eighth, Ninth and Eleventh degrees, but the nature of it differed.

By his own account, Grant had in 1944-1945 written a number of papers on Crowley's suggestion, and one of them was on the subject of sexual magic. Crowley was apparently enough impressed by it to admit Grant to the IX°. (9) This initiation was later complemented with secret Tantric instructions from David Curwen (who had become a IX° in 1945). By studying these documents Grant came to realize that Crowley's knowledge of sexual Tantra was limited, if not even wrong. According to Grant, these documents were the same as the ones that Curwen had lent Crowley in 1945, which are described by Grant as a *Comment on the Anandalahari*. (10) Curwen seems to have had a lasting effect on Grant, and it was through him that Grant claimed to have received 'full initiation into a highly recondite formula of the Tantric vama marg' (i.e. left-hand path). (11) After Crowley's death, Grant took it upon himself to rework the sexual magic of the O.T.O. along what he considered to be Tantric principles, while at the same time trying to reorganize the entire system of the Order. The reorganization basically consisted of the merging of the O.T.O. with another of Crowley's Orders, the A.A. but according to Grant himself this failed, and soon the intimations of a new lodge overshadowed all his plans, the New Isis Lodge. (12)

The New Isis Lodge of the O.T.O. in London was founded by Grant in 1955 and was active until 1962, and it was in this lodge that Indian Tantra was connected to the sexual magic of the O.T.O. for the first time in a systematic manner. (13) The magical experiments carried out by the New Isis Lodge seem to have had a lasting effect on Grant, who later on would largely base his so-called Typhonian Trilogies on his time with the Lodge. It was during this period that two key texts in the magical system of Kenneth Grant were received as results from rituals performed in New Isis Lodge: *Wisdom of S'iba* (14) and *OKBISh*, or *The Book of the Spider*. (15) It is interesting to

note that Grant apparently interpreted certain passages of *The Book of the Spider* as referring to David Curwen, and that he considered Curwen to have been an important factor in his initiation. In the *Typhonian Trilogies*, moreover, Grant writes extensively on his system of sexual magic, particularly in *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (1973) and *Cults of the Shadow* (1975). As with Crowley, the Eighth degree deals with masturbation and the Ninth degree with heterosexual sex while the Eleventh degree, in contrast with Crowley's system, does not deal with anal sex, but with heterosexual sex during which the woman is menstruating. According to Grant, Crowley was not aware of the Tantric theories on the importance of the female sexual fluids, which Grant calls *kalas*. Grant describes the *kalas* as psycho-sexual secretions of the Tantric *suvasini*, and goes on to state that there are 16 different *kalas* that practitioners of sexual magic deal with and that these form the bases, together with the male fluids, of the Elixir. The *kalas* refers in the *Tantras* 'specifically to the vaginal vibrations brought on by an intensification of ritual procedure during the performance of the *Kaula* rites'. (16) As mentioned, Grant dismissed anal sexual practices as pertaining to the Eleventh degree, and instead attributed the Eleventh degree to sexual magic in connection with menstruation, in which woman is connected to the twenty-eight day lunar cycle:

The sun and the moon are the basis of these 16 emanations. In the human organism they are the male and the female. Their energization and polarization produce *kalas* that flow from the female genital outlet at specific stages of the dual lunation which constitutes the 28 day cycle of the lunar month. (17)

The importance of Tantra and the mysteries of the *kalas* to Grant's form of sexual magic cannot be overstated. According to Grant, the sole object of his *Typhonian Trilogies* is in fact 'to present the arcane science of the *kalas* in terms of the Western Mystery Tradition'. (18) With that, the development of the sexual magic of the *Typhonian O.T.O.*, as expressed in the works of Kenneth Grant, comes full circle with the earliest references to sexual magic published in the *Jubilaums-Ausgabe Der Oriflamme* (1912): the Eastern origins of the *O.T.O.*'s sexual magic hinted at in *Der Oriflamme* (although these origins must be considered to be spurious) become a fact in the sense that the secret instructions in sexual magic are combined with Tantric teachings. That way, the sexual magic of Kenneth Grant is an illustrative example of Neo-Tantra.

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If you have found this extract interesting, we would recommend Henrik Bogdan's new book: *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, SUNY, 2007.

Notes

Gerald Yorke, 'Tantric Hedonism', *The Occult Observer* 3 (1949):178-179.
Kenneth Grant, *Manifesto of the British Branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis* (London, 1948), 1. The manifesto is not dated, but Grant confirmed to the present author that it was circulated around 1948, after he had been acknowledged a IX by Karl J. Germer.

Kenneth Grant to Henrik Bogdan, 15 November 2001.

Kenneth Grant to Austin Osman Spare, 18 April 1952, reprinted in Kenneth Grant and Steffi Grant, *Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare* (London: Fulgur 1998), 79.

Grant and Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, 283 n. 92.

Karl Germer to Kenneth Grant, 20 July 1955.

Kenneth Grant to Bill Heidrick, 28 January 1984.

These articles have been collected, together with a few later articles, and published as Kenneth Grant, *At the Feet of the Guru* (London: Starfire, 2006).

For a bibliography of Grant, see Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant: A Bibliography – from 1948* (Gothenburg: Academia Esoterica Press, 2003).

Kenneth Grant to Bill Heidrick, 28 January 1984.

Grant, *Beyond the Mauve Zone*, 101.

Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, 49. Incidentally, Kenneth Grant has dedicated this book to David Curwen.

Kenneth Grant to Henrik Bogdan, 24 August 2004

See Kenneth Grant, *Manifesto of New Isis Lodge O.T.O.* (London, 1955) for further information about this lodge. See 'The Pyramid of Power' by Steffi Grant for the New Isis Lodge's degree system together with corresponding esoteric subjects. Significantly, Tantra is here connected to alchemy. Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain* (London: Skoob Books, 1992), 37. 'The Pyramid of Power' was originally printed in *Key to the Pyramid* (London, privately printed, 1952) by Kenneth Grant, i.e. three years prior to the formation of New Isis Lodge.

Kenneth Grant, *Outer Gateways* (London: Skoob Books, 1994), 166-81.

Kenneth Grant, *The Ninth Arch* (London: Starfire, 2002), 1-49.

Kenneth Grant, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (London: Skoob Books, 1992 [1972]), 211-12.

Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time* (London: Frederick Muller, 1980), 26. It should be noted that Crowley also experimented with elixirs composed while the female partner was menstruating-the elixir was in this case referred to as Elixir Rubaeus, i.e. Red Elixir-but this form of sexual magic was seen as a variant of the ninth degree.

Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden* (London: Frederick Muller, 1977), 135.

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Beyond our Ken: a review of 'Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative'

by Alan Moore

First published in Joel Biroco's Kaos 14, 2002

"This is a terrible defect in your outlook on life; you cannot be content with the simplicity of reality and fact; you have to go off into a pipe-dream."

Aleister Crowley, writing to Kenneth Grant, February 15, 1945

As fascinating and as ultimately mystifying as a giant squid in a cocktail dress, what shall we make of Kenneth Grant? I know few occultists without at least a passing interest in his work, and I know fewer still who would profess to have the first idea what he is on about. What he is on. To open any Grant text following his relatively lucid *Magical Revival* is to plunge into an information soup, an overwhelming and hallucinatory bouillon of arcane fact, mystic speculation and apparent outright fantasy, as appetising (and as structured) as a dish of Gumbo. The delicious esoteric fragments tumble past in an incessant boil of prose, each morsel having the authentic taste of magic, each entirely disconnected from the morsel which preceded it. Sometimes it seems as if inferior ingredients have been included, from an unreliable source: the occult data and the correspondences that simply fail to check out when investigated, knowledge that appears to have been channelled rather than researched. Doubtful transmissions from the Mauve Zone.

Spicing this delirious broth, characteristically we come across bewildering yet urgent outbursts in which Grant repeatedly protests that the eleventh degree ritual of the OTO involves no homosexual practices, or jaw-dropping accounts of magic workings that defy all credibility, with live baboons dragged screeching into nothingness by extrahuman forces, this delivered casually, almost as after-dinner anecdote. The onslaught of compulsive weirdness in Grant's work is unrelenting, filled with jumpy fast-cuts that remind one less of text than television: H P Lovecraft's *House Party*. Each chapter an emetic gush of curdling chthonic biles and juices served up steaming, a hot shrapnel of ideas, intense and indiscriminate. A shotgun full of snails and amethysts discharged point blank into the reader's face.

The difficulty in assessing Kenneth Grant as writer is compounded by his stance as magus which, quite properly, insists upon the personal and the subjective, making it impossible to view his writings without reference to Grant himself, the atmosphere of his peculiar mind hung in a churning fogbank over every page. A mere fifteen, Grant blundered into the fluorescent vortex of Aleister Crowley via a copy of *Magick in Theory and Practice* discovered in a Charing Cross Road bookshop. Three years later, aged eighteen, Grant joined the army "with the expectation of being sent to India, where I had hopes of finding a guru". Given that Grant's enlistment took place at the height of World War II, this statement would seem to suggest a grasp upon conventional worldly reality that was at best precarious. Eighteen months after setting out on his unusual khaki path towards enlightenment, Grant suffered an unspecified "health breakdown" and was discharged from the forces. During convalescence, he wrote to the Jermyn Street address listed in Crowley's *Book of Thoth*, and subsequently entered into first a correspondence and then, later, full apprenticeship with the Great Beast.

Grant, at the time, was barely twenty, while the Master Therion was in his early seventies, a magus down to his last chants and just about to settle into premises at Netherwood in Hastings, Crowley's terminal address. The details of the correspondence and relationship are to be found in Grant's *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, an

entrancing blend of fannish scrapbook and *The Screwtape Letters*, published by Skoob Books in 1991. The frequently exasperated tone of Crowley's letters to his younger acolyte suggests a Thelemic Laurel and Hardy routine: Stan fails to magickally identify a channelled drawing of the entity called LAM. In retaliation, Olly knocks Stan's bowler hat off and then treads on it. Stan scratches his head and weeps.

In spite of such one-sided spats between the hapless Grant and his impossibly demanding tutor, Crowley penned a memo during 1946 to the following effect: "Value of Grant: if I die or go to USA, there must be a trained man to take care of the English OTO." This memo is one of the building blocks supporting Grant's succession to the leadership of what is now called the Typhonian OTO, a wilfully chthonic enterprise that seems devoted to exploring Magic's darker countenance; its subterranean underbelly. Clearly, these psychic cave-diving expeditions have done much to generate the slightly creepy, claustrophobic aura that perfumes the reputation of both Grant and his organisation. It's not so much that the Typhonian OTO has "something of the night" about it, more that it gargles with the stuff, splashes it underneath both arms and down its underpants, a schoolboy gone berserk on brimstone aftershave.

Hardly surprising, then, that this relentlessly infernal posture should elicit comment, much of it adverse. As an example, occult writer Gerald Suster has described Grant and his circle as "wallowing in Qlipothic slime", and while this might sound like a perfectly good Saturday night out to you or I, it seems to be intended as a criticism. Grant, it must be said, does not bend over backwards to contradict this impression. Each new published work contains a further mapping of his inner, magic landscape that exposes more of its bizarre nocturnal landmarks, its unutterable flora and fauna: mauve zones, ninth arches and tunnels of Set; leapers and Outer Gods and elementals in the form of monstrous aquatic owls. The ingress of alien information through the knowledge-gate of the eleventh Sephiroth. Mind parasites. Neural invaders. Great Cthulhu. An apparently deliberate blurring of the line between describing Separate Reality and writing Magic Fiction, if there ever really was a line to blur.

This brings us to *Against the Light*, ostensibly a novel rather than a book of writings about magic, issued in a limited hardback edition of a thousand by Starfire Publishing Ltd. From the word go the novel, if novel it be, adopts an unapologetically ambiguous position. Nowhere on its jacket or within do we find any notice that *Against the Light* is meant to be received as fiction. The only description of its content that we find is in the volume's cryptic subtitle: *A Nightside Narrative*.

The text itself, of course, only confounds the matter further. From the opening dedication to Grant's great-uncle, one Phineas Marsh Black, we are immersed within the question that has surely haunted every reader of Grant's earlier writings: just how much of this is supposed to be... you know... real? The prologue talks of "Uncle Phin" and Grant's great-cousin Gregor, seemingly also a relative of Crowley's and an actual person, his existence at least vouched for elsewhere in Grant's oeuvre of avowed nonfiction. From here we trip lightly through a brief discussion of Clan Grant and an unusual family heirloom in the form of a forbidden book known as Grant's Grimoire, this

being a record of the quaint, longstanding family tradition of “traffic with entities not of this world”. The author helpfully informs us that “there exists to this day in the library of a Florentine family an Italian version, *Il Grimoire Grantiano*.”

Scarcely have we had time to absorb this stylish continental touch than we are introduced to yet another member of Clan Grant, this time an ancestor named Margaret Wyard who, the author gleefully informs us, is alleged to have claimed carnal knowledge of the Devil in a bestial form at UFO hotspot Rendlesham Forest during the sixteenth century. Just as we’re starting to appreciate how much fun Christmas family reunions at the Grant place must have been, we’re whisked away into the body of a narrative where the first person author and a scryer-for-hire named Margaret Leasing attempt to solve the interlocking mysteries of Margaret Wyard and the grimoire, leading them into the world of shrieking cosmic horror where Grant at least seems to feel most at home, most thoroughly relaxed.

Nothing about the style of Grant’s delivery throughout the book distinguishes *Against the Light* from the preceding non-fictional work. The author’s voice has the same worryingly straight-faced tone to which the readers have become accustomed, and instead of any novelistic structure we see Grant employ his usual device of sweeping a vast pile of fascinating information up into one place, then chopping it out arbitrarily into a semblance of individual chapters. Characters familiar from Grant’s previous work recur: Crowley himself, along with Austin Osman Spare, Yeld Paterson and Black Eagle, Spare’s famous spirit guide. The anecdotes describing ritual events and states are not intrinsically more unbelievable than those to be found in Grant’s earlier work, except that here they occupy more space. Presenting his account, the author does not seem less earnest or less anxious to convince than he seems in *Nightside of Eden* or *Outside the Circles of Time*.

Given the above, attempting to critique *Against the Light* by the same terms one would apply to, say, a current horror-fantasy novella would seem both redundant and unfair. Should we then treat the book as an expanded ritual journal, a straightforward piece of magical reportage, only differing from Grant’s previous work in its ratio of anecdote to ideology? Again, this presents difficulties, not least being that alongside all the genuine occult celebrities woven into Grant’s tale we also find clearly fictitious personages such as Helen Vaughn, half-human heroine of Arthur Machen’s work *The Great God Pan*, or Richard Pickman, the doomed artist spirited away by ghouls in H P Lovecraft’s *Pickman’s Model*. Throw in Sin Sin Wa, an astral Chinaman who seems to be the model for Sax Rohmer’s *Fu Manchu*, and one begins to grasp the full dimension of the problem.

Complicating matters is the nature of the narrative itself, with certain passages apparently intended to take place somewhere at least within the vague proximity of ordinary reality, while other parts plunge us into scryed scenes from history or else fullfledged shamanic visions. Furthermore, Grant seldom bothers to make the transition between one state and another absolutely clear and, indeed, seems to see the different planes of narrative as pretty interchangeable. We’re dragged, with the narrator, from the

glittering hallucinatory bowels of a Lovecraftian underworld, through West End London and into the scrying bowl, often within a page. Adding to the disorienting nature of the tale is the narrator's almost total lack of any recognisable emotional reaction to the Bosch-like apparitions he is constantly confronted by. The literary influence of Lovecraft, obviously a writer much admired by Grant, shows here in the flatness of human characterisation when compared to the vivid and chop-smacking depictions of the narrative's squamous, turns-human horrors.

This lack of emotional response, if we are dealing with an actual account of Grant's experiences rather than fantastic fiction, conveys an absence of affect that turns the landscape of the prose, merely hallucinatory before, into a genuinely psychopathic vista, both obsessive and unsettling. But are we dealing, here, with real experience? If so, real in what sense? Is this a standard horror yarn with an authoritative occult gloss? Is this the fleshed-out record of a ritual working, or a glimpse into the marvellous rubbish left by the collapse of an extraordinary mind? Just what in hell, exactly, are we looking at?

Obviously, the simplest course of action would be to conclude that Grant's work represents no more than funny-coloured bedlam froth, a warning to the rest of us about what happens when you start believing outré things and hang round with Aleister Crowley. This, however, leads us back to our original dilemma: if Grant's opus can be neatly summed up as merely incoherent ravings, why do most occultists that I know, myself included, have more or less everything that Grant has ever published resting on our shelves? Also, how shall we square a view of Grant as foaming lunatic with the same Kenneth Grant who has contributed so much of worth to the contemporary occult worldview? Without Grant to champion the then-all-but-forgotten works of his friend Austin Osman Spare, the artist would now be remembered as a minor fantasist who sometimes did the odd impressive nude (this was the view advanced in the dismissive, limp obituary notices that Spare's contemporary critics heaped upon him). Without Grant's insistence that the works of H P Lovecraft represented valid channels of magical information, much of the furniture and landscape of our modern magic systems, Chaos magic for example, would be utterly unrecognisable. A sasquatch at a vicarage teaparty, Grant is too big to dismiss, too weird to feel entirely comfortable about. What shall we make of Kenneth Grant?

The answer, if indeed there is an answer, might lie part-concealed within *Against the Light's* seemingly cryptic subtitle, *A Nightside Narrative*. Is this a simple flourish, a mere gothic affectation, or could it be an attempt to provide a label that is both more accurate and more explanatory than plain unvarnished "fiction"?

Let us pause here to consider the essential nature of Grant's contributions to the world of Magic. From his advocacy of the works of Spare and Lovecraft to this latest offering, it's difficult not to perceive a man deeply in love with what Sax Rohmer christened the Romance of Sorcery. This is not to label Grant a fantasist in the pejorative sense: there's a good case to be made for the position that fiction, romance and fantasy have always been the cornerstone of Magic theory. From the first cave-wall surrealism of Palaeolithic shamans, through the visionary poetry of Blake and the vastly important,

almost- free -associational synthesis of occult ideas constructed by Eliphas Levi, on to Crowley and Blavatsky, to the Lovecraft/Moorcock tropes of the Chaos magicians, what we see acknowledged is the staggering supernatural power of creative imagination.

Might not the entire of Magic be described as traffic between That Which Is and That Which Is Not; between fact and fiction? If we are to speak of Magic as “The Art”, should we not also speak of Art as Magic? Even Crowley tellingly and rather poignantly describes great artists as superior to great magicians. Crowley also points out the connection that exists between a grimoire and a grammar, between casting spells and spelling; goes so far as to admit, at one point, that the greater part of magical activity lies in simply writing about it. Clearly there is a reason why Hermes and Thoth, the Gods of Magic, should be simultaneously the Gods of Writing.

The magician conjures angels or else demons, out of nothingness into manifestation, while the novelist does likewise with her ideas and her characters. Again we have a commerce between the existent and the non-existent, something out of nothingness, the rabbit from an empty hat that is perhaps the very crux of magical endeavour.

The intensely beautiful and elegant schema described by the Qabala, which rests at the fulcrum of Western Occult Tradition, speaks of the ninth, lunar sphere of Yesod as the gate through which all energies from higher stations on the Tree of Life pour down into material form and manifest existence. Yesod, as the sphere of the unconscious mind, is thus the well from which both the magician and the artist draw. Though situated “higher” than the earthly and material sphere of Malkuth on the Qabalistic diagram, Yesod at the same time represents the underworld of our subconscious and oneiric faculties, the eerie and chthonic realm of Hecate upon which Grant and his Typhoman OTO lavish their magical attention. These are the bone-strewn caves that rest beneath the deepest cellars of Jung’s mansion of the human soul, the dark pits where all dreams and magics spawn. All fictions and insanities born in the queer light of a buried moon: this is the Nightside.

We may read this as the metaphor upon which the subtitle of *Against the Light* depends. The Dayside can perhaps be seen as the consensual outer world of Apollonian thought, empiric reason and the waking mind; the sharp-edged sunlit world of Fact. The Nightside, judged by the same token, then becomes a personal and inner realm of Dionysiac non-sense, fantasy and dream; the shifting moonlit realm of Fiction. In between these two states lies a twilight, intermediary domain: a mauve zone, if you will. This is William Hope Hodgson’s borderland, a troubling grey area in our contract with Reality, the kingdom of the Half-Real, of the swine-things and the shoggoths and the leapers. A blurred spot between the actual and the imaginary. Sometimes things come through. Sometimes, things trade position with their own reflection. Real works of Magic are exposed as fictions. Works of fiction are revealed as Magic. Yelda Paterson winks knowingly at Helen Vaughn and Anna Sprengel. If a witch or sorcerer be of sufficient magnitude and power, the fact that he or she be also fictional should not prove any great impediment.

Viewed in this crepuscular light, the ambiguities that haunt Grant's book can be resolved. This is not a work of fiction, nor is it authentic Magic documentary. Instead, it is both of those things, shaped by an understanding that the territory of the fantastic is of singular importance to the magus. The subterranean landscape of the Unreal yields a lush, fertile environment, pregnant with possibility, that will sustain both occultist and artist. New life forms erupting from corrosive and impossible conditions, clustering around the boiling mouths of deep sub-oceanic vents or fissures.

It need not be said that this terrain is also highly dangerous: always the risk of being swallowed by one's own conjured illusions. In Pellucidar, the flora and the fauna can be snappish; unpredictable. Tunnels of Set collapse and leave the rescue party, if there is one, listening for voices from the rubble. Or they'll find you dangling from the Ninth Arch, twisting slowly in the astral breeze, strangled by shadows. Dreamshot. Yellow Brick Road-kill.

Then again, it might be argued that no true, authentic magic insight is achievable without considerable risk. Kenneth Grant's books, despite or possibly because of their forays into dementia, have more genuine occult power than works produced by more conventionally coherent authors, and are certainly a more engrossing read. The lack of any safety-rail about Grant's prose is one of its most captivating features. Purple passages that sometimes shift into the ultra-violet. Trains of speculation in spectacular head-on collision. Thousands dead.

Semantic theory breaks down all communication into two components, noise and signal. Thoth the language god and his pet ape, the gibbering Cynocephalus, the monkey with the typewriter. Order and chaos. Paradoxically, the noise is capable of holding much more information than the signal: a page of Janet and John is more or less entirely signal and contains a minimum of information, while a page of Joyce's Ulysses is almost wholly noise and therefore holds a massive quantity of coded data. So with Kenneth Grant, the constant flood of ideas that elude the reader's comprehension and yet are suffused with a greater potential, with a greater potency of meaning than the notions of his more reliable, pedestrian contemporaries. Laudanum as compared with Alcopops. Value of Grant: as paranormal pit-canary and as point-man, Kenneth Grant has been prepared to roll his sleeves up and plunge elbow deep in the "Qlipothic slime" of his imagination, benefiting those of us who'd rather watch from a safe distance. In amongst the vast amount of tentacled and slithering bug-eyed junk he trawls up in his nets there have been pearls of an impressive size and lustre. It is hard to name another single living individual who has done more to shape contemporary western thinking with regard to Magic. If we should dismiss him and his work, on what grounds should we do so? That he's dark? That he's as mad as tits on a piranha? That he's weird? As if the world of the occult was the last place one should expect to find darkness, insanity or weirdness. Rather, we should recognise Grant as a pioneer, if only by the arrows in his back; a fabulous arcane adventurer of an old school that's long since disappeared, if indeed it was ever "really" there; more a successor to John Silence, Simon Iff, Carnacki and the gang than a mere Crowley acolyte.

Against the Light is a rip-roaring arcane text, two-fisted occultism. Read as novel or as magic treatise, it will fail to satisfy, having neither the neat structure of fiction nor the compelling credibility of fact. Read as an incredible chimaeric hybrid of the two, and thus a striking comment on the strange interrelationship between them, it could conversely be seen as a bold, decadent masterpiece, a communiqué from reason's furthest reaches, and beyond. It's to be hoped that the response of the occult book-buying public is sufficient to encourage Starfire Publishing to release any subsequent "Nightside Narratives", granting us further access to Grant's logbook as he presses on with his safari into nightmare. Magic's Mr Kurtz seeking his Heart of Darkness. As a bulletin from that internal, fictive dark, Against the Light reminds us that the shadow holds its own form of illumination. Highly recommended for those with an interest in the point where the extremes of magic meet the furthest, most precarious edge of fantasy and fiction. This is Hardcore.

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Kenneth Grant and the Merovingian Mythos
by Vadge Moore

First published in Dagobert's Revenge, 2001

"Our work is therefore historically authentic; the rediscovery of the Sumerian Tradition."

Aleister Crowley

"Lincoln's researches have undoubtedly illumined certain phases of an ancient myth-cycle intimately associated with the Typhonian Current. They reveal a possible connection between an historic lineage – the Merovingian – and the Typhonian Tradition."

Kenneth Grant

What is this Typhonian Tradition and how is it linked to the Merovingian/Grail Bloodline and the Priory of Sion as described in Michael Baigent, Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh's book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*? According to Kenneth Grant, a leading exponent of this Typhonian Tradition, and head of the Ordo Templi Orientis (a magical

organization that was once headed by the one and only Aleister Crowley) this tradition is part of a current of magical force and occult lore dating back to Sumeria and pre-Dynastic Egypt. Originally known as the Draconian Tradition it is a magical current “based on initiated knowledge or gnosis of the Fire Snake.” The Fire Snake is also known as the Kundalini or the Ophidian Current; the basis of all true initiation.

merovingianmythosw.jpg

Et in Arcadia Ego, by Nicolas Poussin (1647)

Who is Typhon? According to Mr. Grant, Typhon is “The feminine aspect of Set; sometimes typified as the Mother of Set in her role of Goddess of the Seven Stars, of which Set is the Eighth.” Set is the brother of Osiris in the Egyptian Pantheon. Set, Osiris’ dark brother, chopped Osiris up into many pieces, leaving him for dead. Set was also the prototype for Satan. Grant writes, “The word Set or Sut, means ‘black’. This indicates not only the generative nature of this god but also his association with the night-world, Amenta, for from being a god of the heavens Set fell beneath the horizon and was recognized in later mythologies as the Lord of Hell, the Hidden Land....This god is of supreme importance in Crowley’s Cult, being not only the name of the primal creative spirit but also the formula of sexual magick.”

merovingianmythos4a.jpg

Left: “Typhon” (A. Kircher, *Oedipus aegyptiacus*)

Right: “Typhon” (Le Tarot alchimique)

Set was the “black god”. He was known as “he who is below.” He was banished to the underworld by his “twin” Horus for killing Osiris. The Nephilim were banished to the center of the earth for disobeying God by mating with the daughters of men and teaching them the “forbidden” arts. In this publication the Nephilim have been identified as the Fathers of the Merovingians. Set was generally considered to be a vile, vicious god baneful to men. But there are enough aspects of this god that link him to the ancient Sumerian myths, the basis of the Merovingian mythos published in this magazine, to show that Set is to be identified with the same gods and characters that make up these Mythos. He may have been considered baneful towards some races, but not the race of the Grail.

In E.A. Wallis Budge’s book *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Set is identified as a personification “of the forces of the waters which were supposed to resist light and order. A number of beasts which dwelt in the water, were regarded as symbols of him and of beings wherein he took up his habitation.” We will recall that the Merovingian race was sired by a water beast known as the Quinotaur. This Quinotaur took the form of a sea-bull. Crowley’s personal seal was of a sea goat. Grant, writing of Crowley’s Seal of the Beast, says: “The beast is the sea-goat or amphibious monster identical with Cthulhu, the Quinotaure or Bull of the Deep.” Grant writes as a footnote; “The waters under the earth; home of the ‘ancestors’ or subconscious atavisms of the race.” Is this a

reference to the race of the Grail?

Grant, writing of the cross of the four corners says; "The intersection of this surface (horizontal and vertical) represent, therefore, the gateway to another dimension, the waters beneath the earth that mirror in their uncertain depths the heights of space above the earth wherein glow the stars, the unborn or un-fleshed souls of future states of consciousness, or simply life beyond earth. The mortal world spreads east and west and the land of the invisibles lies above and below it in the vertical dimensions of height and depths, north and south, Horus and Set." This ties in with The Book of Enoch and the Hosts above and the fallen, banished Nephilim below. This also reminds us of the twins or brother gods in Sumeria called Enki and Enlil. Enki, the infernal of the two, represents Set and Enlil represents Horus (although in this context Enlil would also be Osiris). In ancient mythologies names and stories can be switched and one god can also be an attribute of another. It's best to keep this in mind when studying this type of material. Set kills Osiris as Enki kills Enlil. As it has been shown in another article of this publication, Enki is associated with Cain, and Cain was a very bad boy. Enki was an infernal god that has been identified, in this publication, as siring the Merovingian race.

Crowley writes, regarding his Holy Guardian Angel Aiwass, or for want of a better term, his spirit guide; "I now incline to believe that Aiwass is not only the God or Devil once held holy in Sumer, and mine own Holy Guardian Angel but also a man as I am , insofar as he uses a human body to make His Magickal link with mankind..." Aiwass is the "minister" of Hoor-Paar -Kraat who is another aspect of Set. In Crowley's Book of the Law, Aiwass puts Crowley in touch with the gods now in charge of this planet. This is significant as Crowley describes Aiwass as also manifesting as a man not just a god. This is what we have discovered in this magazine regarding the gods of ancient Sumeria who appeared as gods, men and kings. They seemed to straddle the fence of the divine and mortal worlds. Enki has been associated with Set (in Tracy Twyman's article 'The Merovingian Mythos: Its Symbolic Significance, and it's Roots in the Ancient Kingdom of Atlantis') who is also Satan. It is significant that Crowley identified himself as "The Great Beast 666." In one of Grant's glossaries we read: "Vivo: A corrupt form of OVIZ or Aiwaz, the god worshipped in ancient Sumer and identical with Set or Shaitan."

Grant, writing of the "eye of the void" of a primal African cult says: "This void was known as Elemi, a name which is said to be incommunicable. It was the equivalent of El or Al , continued in the Draconian Cults as El Shaddai or Al Shaitan, the stellar deity worshipped by the Arabs and the Jews and by the earliest settlers in Sumer (in Sumeria the god El is also known as Ia) Alemi or Alhim became the Elohim of biblical lore. These gods or cosmic powers poured through the Veil of the Ain – the all seeing eye – which has its human analogue in the ajna chakra, concentrated in the first power zone-Kether." The Elohim are messengers from on high bringing "knowledge" down for mankind, similar to the Nephilim. They are also associated with Set, or the Chaldean form of Set, Shaitan.

Writing of the Great Old Ones or Elder Gods from Lovecraftian lore, Grant says, "The letter M, the key vibration of the plane of the Elder Gods, is represented mythologically

as the sea-goat, Makaru or as the crocodile, the beast of the waters.” Couldn’t Makaru be a form of Merovee who spawned the Merovingians, and was sired himself from a sea-bull? Tracy Twyman has already written of the connections between Lovecraft’s Necronomicon Mythos and the Merovingians in her article ‘Dead But Dreaming: The Great Old Ones of Lovecraftian Legend Reinterpreted as Sumerian/Atlantean Kings.’

Now we come to the Qliphoth. The Qliphoth are denizens of the back side of the Tree of Life. This back side or dark side is said to be behind the regular Sephirah of the Qabalah. They are said to be the shells or the husks of the dayside of the Tree. But according to Kenneth Grant they are actually the first, primal manifestation of all things. In terms of Lovecraftian lore they are the Ancient Ones or Great Old Ones of the Necronomicon. They are the first primal void of Nothing before there was something. They have been considered evil by Qabalists and Occultists for centuries only because they represent the terrible blackness of the void and the complete destruction of what we understand as ego, which seems horrific to us. These Qliphoth reside in what is known as the Tunnels of Set. These Tunnels are behind or beneath the Day Side of the Tree of Life as the Nephilim reside beneath the earth. As terrifying as these “beings” may seem, Grant says they are here to enlighten us, as the Nephilim were. Why is the abode of these beings called the Tunnels of Set? Grant writes; “Of Set, because Set is the Seat of the powers manifest as the Tree of Life.” This is what is known as the Typhonian Tradition that Kenneth Grant speaks of.

Let’s review: Kenneth Grant believes that he is a part of the Typhonian Tradition or Draconian Tradition which is concerned with the god Set who, like the Nephilim, was banished to live beneath the earth. The Nephilim are believed to have sired the Merovingian Race. Set is a god of the waters and the Merovingian race was sired by a god, the Quinotaur, that also was a beast of the waters. The denizens of the Tunnels of Set, which are behind the Tree of Life, or beneath have been considered “evil” and bestial and are known in the ancient Hebrew texts of the Qabalah as the Qliphoth. The Qliphoth, according to Grant, are actually of benefit to the initiated in order to take them to another level of initiation. Now here is the kicker: according to E.A. Wallis Budge, “Animals with red or reddish brown hair or skins were, and even red haired men were supposed to be especially under the influence of Set.” As is well known to anyone reading this publication, the Merovingians were notorious for their red hair and it was believed that this is where they received all of their “powers.”

Crowley’s design of the Chariot card in his Tarot Deck depicts a Knight (Templar?) holding a disk that represents the Grail. Anyone having read The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail would know that the Templars were Knights pledged to defend the Merovingian/Grail Bloodline. Grant says, in a footnote; “it should be noted that the Graal-Bearer [represented on the Tarot card] is depicted in amber-coloured armor [amber or red, the color associated with the Merovingians]. Amber or Orange appears repeatedly in accounts of UFO sightings.” Crowley, in his Book of Thoth, writes; “The Charioteer is clothed in the amber-coloured armor appropriate to the sign. He is throned in the chariot rather than conducting it, because the whole system of progression is perfectly balanced. His only function is to bear the Holy Grail.” Grant writes, “The bearer

of the Graal [Knight Templar?] depicted on Atu VII [the Tarot card] may therefore be identified with the bringer to earth of the Sangraal, or blood royal, the blood which flows in the veins of the Kingly Man extolled by Crowley, although not understood by him in the sense of trans-human Intelligence. Crowley's design for the Graal resembles as closely as may be, for a pre-1947 representation, a shape frequently described in connection with particular types of UFO." Pre-1947 because, as Grant says, that year was the modern explosion of accounts of UFO "sightings" around the world. I am not partial to the literal belief in UFO's. I believe, as Dr. Carl Jung believed, that these UFO sightings are a product of our unconscious veiling of an ancient human experience. Enough said. This "bringing to earth" of the Sangraal by UFO's is the modern day equivalent of the Nephilim, the Outer Ones, or the Elohim earthling "knowledge" and siring a new race of "kingly" beings for this world. Kingly i.e., the Merovingians. The Merovingian blood is the blood of kings, the kings or gods from ancient Sumeria and beyond.

The Plantard family crest is regarded as the key to the Typhonian/Draconian Current, which is the demonic lineage of the Merovingian bloodline. The Typhonian Current refers to the Dragon lineage of Satan. – Image and text from: watch.pair.com

In his book *Outer Gateways* Kenneth Grant writes: "In *The Holy Blood and The Holy Grail*, the authors reproduce the family crest of Clan Plantard, the contemporary representative of which was, until recently, the Grand Master of the Priore de Sion, an Order which, according to Lincoln, dominated the Order of the Knights Templar and various other highly influential institutions which, at certain periods of history, included the Vatican. The crest which supplies the key to the Current represented by the Merovingian bloodline and the Order of Sion, comprises the symbols of the Typhonian line of descent: the two bears, eleven bees, and the fleur de lys. The motto incorporated in the crest reads 'Et in Arcadia ego.' Arcadia=127, which is the number of the Egyptian Goddess Heqt who was typified by the 'lower part of the back, or haunch.' The two bears denote the Mother (Typhon) and her son (Set). The image of the bee pictorializes the buzzing or humming vibration peculiar to the Outer Ones, or their vehicles. Eleven is the number of Those who are Without, or beyond, the Tree of Life, thus identifying the Outer Ones." The Outer Ones are also the Qliphoth or the Ancient Ones of Lovecraftian lore. That the Typhonian Tradition and the Merovingian Tradition share the same important symbols seems to be much more than a mere coincidence.

In the Typhonian Tradition the Bear is the constellation of Ursa Major. The stars must be aligned in a specific way in order for Set to be properly invoked. To the Priory of Sion (the secret, occult organization dedicated to preserving the Merovingian Bloodline), the Bear was an animal of the Goddess Diana. According to Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, the authors of *The Templar Revelation*, "...the Merovingian kings, from their founder Merovee to Clovis (who converted to Christianity in 496) were 'pagan kings of the cult of Diana'." Picknett and Prince got this information from the *Dossiers Secrets of the Priory of Sion*. The bees, which are a recurring symbol of the Merovingians are, in the Typhonian Tradition, represented frequently as the humming or buzzing sound that occurs before the appearance of the Great Old Ones or "beings" proper to this tradition.

Grant writes “The bee, beetle, or crab, is therefore the link between the earliest manifestation of the Typhonion current and its final phases.” Also; “217 is the key number of [Crowley’s] The Book of the Law. 217 is also the number of DBVRH, meaning ‘a bee’ which is the specific symbol of Sekhet, whose name means ‘a bee.’ Sekhet is another aspect of the god Set. There are eleven bees because eleven is the number of Magick and of the sephirah on the Tree of Life, called Daath, which is the “Gateway” to the backside of the Tree and to the Gods. Kenneth Grant’s wife Steffi Grant illustrated the cover of her husband’s book Beyond the Mauve Zone with an image of two bees holding a crystal. As for the fleur-de-lys, in the Typhonian Tradition it represents the ‘kingly man’ that Crowley extols and the inheritor of the Grail Bloodline. In The Vision and the Voice, Crowley is “conversing” with his Holy Guardian Angel Aiwass, who says: “For I am not appointed to guard thee, but we are of the blood royal, the guardians of the Treasure-house of Wisdom”: the “blood royal,” the Sangraal of the Holy Grail.

Throughout all of Kenneth Grant’s books there are references to ideas, archetypes, and images related to the Sumerians, the Merovingians and especially to the mythos that Tracy Twyman has been uncovering in this publication. There are references that I haven’t even mentioned. For instance, the bat wings discovered at Rennes le Chateau that in the Typhonian Tradition represent the inversion of the senses that lead to enlightenment and occult knowledge. I agree with Grant that Henry Lincoln’s research has “illuminated certain phases of an ancient myth-cycle intimately associated with the Typhonian Current.” It seems that the farther down this road we go, the closer we get to the truth.

Postscript: More on the Bees

“The beehive is found in Masonry as a reminder that in diligence and labor for a common good true happiness and prosperity are found. The bee is a symbol of wisdom, for as this tiny insect collects pollen from the flowers, so men may extract wisdom from the experiences of daily life. The bee is sacred to the goddess Venus and, according to mystics, it is one of several forms of life which came to the earth from the planet Venus millions of years ago. Wheat and bananas are said to be of similar origin. This is the reason why the origin of these three forms of life cannot be traced. The fact that bees are ruled by queens is one reason why this insect is considered a sacred feminine symbol.

In India the god Prana—the personification of the universal life force—is sometimes shown surrounded by a circle of bees. Because of its importance in pollenizing flowers, the bee is the accepted symbol of the generative power. At one time the bee was the emblem of the French kings. The rulers of France wore robes embroidered with bees, and the canopies of their thrones were decorated with gigantic figures of these insects.

The fly symbolizes the tormentor, because of the annoyance it causes to animals. The Chaldean god Baal was often called Baal-Zebul, or the god of the dwelling place. The word zebub, or zabab, means a fly, and Baal-Zebul became Baalzebub, or Beelzebub, a word which was loosely translated to mean Jupiter’s fly. The fly was looked upon as a

form of the divine power, because of its ability to destroy decaying substances and thus promote health. The fly may have obtained its name Zebub from its peculiar buzzing or humming. Inman believes that Baalzebub, which the Jews ridiculed as My Lord of Flies, really means My Lord Who Hums or Murmurs.”

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a review by Peter J. Smith

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With the publication of *The Stellar Lode* – the first widely available example of the Grant's fictional work – we are presented with an astonishing *fait accompli*. Namely, that the true heir apparent to Lovecraft's throne as the presiding Master of Weird Fiction is not in fact Stephen King, Ramsey Campbell, Thomas Ligotti, or Clive Barker, but must now be acknowledged as none other than the aforementioned Mr Grant himself!

His short novel, *The Stellar Lode*, was originally written in the mid nineteen fifties, at a time when Grant and a group of like-minded ceremonial magicians ('the Nu-Isis Lodge') were experimenting in actuality with ceremonies and rituals designed to evoke 'extramundane entities' of a truly bizarre nature, bringing them into physical manifestation (see his 1992 study, *Hecate's Fountain*, for detailed descriptions of these workings and their literally incredible results!).

At first glance, Grant's narrative stylings bear all the fruits of his longstanding fascination with Lovecraft, as 'the reluctant prophet' of the revenant cosmic currents of the New Aeon. However, a deeper reading soon displays the influence of a wider literary background, including the Symbolists and Decadents of the *fin de siècle*, and early exponents of the 'weird' genre including Arthur Machen, Sax Rohmer, Vincent Starrett, Robert Chambers and Oscar Wilde (I am thinking here of *The Picture of Dorian Grey*, in

particular). Indeed, on one level, Grant's story could be regarded as an affectionate (and accurate) reconstruction of a very particular narrative form, heavy with decorative and sonorous description, and yet at the same time curiously reserved and archetypically English – the anecdotal prose style of a reminiscent monologue, recounted within the hushed confines of a Gentleman's Club. The tone set is at once conspiratorial and initiatory, as layer upon layer of dark mystery are peeled away from the scintillant core of the tale.

And yet, there is another dimension to Grant's fiction, and one that sets him wholly apart from his contemporaries in the field of supernatural fiction. This is of course the input derived from his unparalleled knowledge of recondite and obscure arcana from the Mystery Cults of Ancient Egypt, Tantric India and Medieval Europe – and furthermore, from his own personal, first hand experience of the very same occult forces which Lovecraft dimly glimpsed in his dreams and waking reveries, and which underlie and underpin the external, diurnal world which we rather hopefully grace with the term, 'reality'.

In the Forties, Kenneth Grant was the personal assistant and protégé of Crowley, during the Great Beast's final years spent in obscurity in a guest house ('Netherwood') in Hastings. Now, Grant can also be seen as the inheritor of the literary mantle of that other enigmatic figure, whose shadow falls heavily across the twilight landscape of occultism: none other than the reclusive Young Man of Providence himself. And with the imminent publication of further examples of Grant's fiction – including the novels *Against the Light* and *Snakewand*, and his collection of evocatory verse, *Black to Black*, Lovecraftians of all denominations are in for a veritable 'feast of the unknown'!

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Kenneth Grant: Marriage between the West and the East
by Henrik Bogdan

The following text is an edited extract from Henrik Bogdan's essay 'Challenging the Morals of Western Society: The Use of Ritualised Sex in Contemporary Occultism' first published in The Pomegranate 8.2, Equinox Publishing, 2006

In 1949, one of Crowley's former disciples Gerald J. Yorke (1901-1983) published a short article called 'Tantric Hedonism' in The Occult Observer in which it was stated that certain sexual techniques used by Tantric yogis to make an Elixir were known by the O.T.O.:

Tantric yogis who follow this path insist that physical processes are involved. For them semen (bindhu) is the gross form of a subtle essence called ojas which is the White Eagle of the Alchemists. Amrita is not normally present in the human body, but is produced by the marriage of the White and Red Eagles; yet its production is essential for that sublimation of the subtle body without which the final body of the soul or rather spirit (atma) with God (Atman) is impossible. Two methods are taught for making this Elixir, one by the three oli mudras of the Hathayogins, which are unknown to western tradition, the other in the Kaula circle of the Bhairavi Diksha, when the Suvacini dances naked. This latter technique is known in the west and is the treasured secret of an Hermetic Order known as the O.T.O. (1)

Yorke was not alone in trying to connect the O.T.O. with Hindu Tantra at this time. In fact, one year previously, in 1948, Kenneth Grant had published a Manifesto of the British Branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis in which he claimed that, among other things, the Order promulgated the essential teachings of the Indian Shakta Tantra Shastra:

In the O.T.O. are promulgated the essential teachings of the Draconian Tradition of Ancient Egypt; the teachings of the Indian Shakta Tantra Shastra; the teachings of the pre-Christian Gnosis; the Initiated Western Tradition as enshrined in the mysteries of the Holy Qabalah, and the Alchemical Mystical and Magical Formulae of the Arcane Schools of the agelong past, as well as the mode of applying practically the essential principles underlying the Spagyric or Hermetic Sciences, the Orphic Mysteries and the use of the Ophidian Current. (2)

Aleister Crowley at Netherwood - Image © Copyright Henrik Bogdan, 2007

Grant met Crowley for the first time on 10 December 1944, at a boarding house where Crowley was staying at the time, and he soon became Crowley's secretary as well as a member of the O.T.O. A year after Crowley's death, Grant was formally acknowledged as a Ninth degree member by Karl J. Germer (1885-1962), who had succeeded Crowley as international head of the O.T.O., and on 5 March 1951 Germer issued a charter to Grant to open a camp of the order in London. As the New Isis Lodge was the only chartered O.T.O. body in England at the time, it appears that Grant interpreted the charter as making him the head of the 'Order in Britain', (3) although New Isis Lodge actually 'did not get underway until 1955'. (4) However, on 20 July 1955 Germer formally revoked the charter and expelled Grant from the O.T.O. because of a manifesto that Grant had issued the same year. (5)

The manifesto in question was an eight-page pamphlet entitled Manifesto of New Isis Lodge O.T.O., in which Grant, through his O.T.O. name Frater Aossic IX°, was identified as the Inner Head of the New Isis Lodge and the O.T.O. (British Branch), using the name The Master Nodens X° for this function. Grant apparently thought little of Germer's letter of expulsion and continued to operate the New Isis Lodge until 1962 on the basis of 'inner Plane' powers. (6) It was also at this time that Grant immersed himself in Hindu philosophy and religion, and during the period 1953-1961 he wrote a number of articles on Advaita Vedanta for Indian journals such as The Call Divine, published in Bombay. (7) It appears that at this time Grant became a follower of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950), known as the Sage of Arunachala.

Manifesto of the New Isis Lodge - © Copyright Kenneth Grant, 1955

Grant would later become instrumental in the revival of Aleister Crowley through the editing (often together with John Symonds) and introduction of a number of Crowley's books, including The Confessions of Aleister Crowley (1969), The Magical Record of the Beast 666 (1972), The Diary of a Drug Fiend (1972), Moonchild (1972), Magick (1973), Magical and Philosophical Commentaries on the Book of the Law (1974), The Complete Astrological Writings (1974), and by writing an introduction to The Heart of the Master (1973). It was also during this period that Grant began to publish his three so-called Typhonian Trilogies commencing with The Magical Revival in 1972, which were completed twenty years later with The Ninth Arch (2002). (8) The early seventies also saw the commencement of, what is usually referred to as, the Typhonian O.T.O. under the leadership of Grant, with its first official announcement published around 1973. While the degree system basically was the same as the one used by Crowley, Grant discarded the use of rituals of initiation and instead conferred degrees on the basis of personal development of its members. The development was apparently checked by Grant himself, and it was expected that the members should send him the records or diaries covering their magical practices on a regular basis. As with Crowley, sexual magic was confined to the Eighth, Ninth and Eleventh degrees, but the nature of it differed.

By his own account, Grant had in 1944-1945 written a number of papers on Crowley's suggestion, and one of them was on the subject of sexual magic. Crowley was apparently enough impressed by it to admit Grant to the IX°. (9) This initiation was later complemented with secret Tantric instructions from David Curwen (who had become a IX° in 1945). By studying these documents Grant came to realize that Crowley's knowledge of sexual Tantra was limited, if not even wrong. According to Grant, these documents were the same as the ones that Curwen had lent Crowley in 1945, which are described by Grant as a Comment on the Anandalahari. (10) Curwen seems to have had a lasting effect on Grant, and it was through him that Grant claimed to have received 'full initiation into a highly recondite formula of the Tantric vama marg' (i.e. left-hand path). (11) After Crowley's death, Grant took it upon himself to rework the sexual magic of the O.T.O. along what he considered to be Tantric principles, while at the same time trying to reorganize the entire system of the Order. The reorganization basically consisted of the merging of the O.T.O with another of Crowley's Orders, the A.A. but according to Grant himself this failed, and soon the intimations of a new lodge overshadowed all his plans, the New Isis Lodge. (12)

The New Isis Lodge of the O.T.O. in London was founded by Grant in 1955 and was active until 1962, and it was in this lodge that Indian Tantra was connected to the sexual magic of the O.T.O. for the first time in a systematic manner. (13) The magical experiments carried out by the New Isis Lodge seem to have had a lasting effect on Grant, who later on would largely base his so-called Typhonian Trilogies on his time with the Lodge. It was during this period that two key texts in the magical system of Kenneth Grant were received as results from rituals performed in New Isis Lodge: Wisdom of S'iba (14) and OKBISh, or The Book of the Spider. (15) It is interesting to note that Grant apparently interpreted certain passages of The Book of the Spider as referring to David Curwen, and that he considered Curwen to have been an important factor in his initiation. In the Typhonian Trilogies, moreover, Grant writes extensively on his system of sexual magic, particularly in Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God (1973) and Cults of the Shadow (1975). As with Crowley, the Eighth degree deals with masturbation and the Ninth degree with heterosexual sex while the Eleventh degree, in contrast with Crowley's system, does not deal with anal sex, but with heterosexual sex during which the woman is menstruating. According to Grant, Crowley was not aware of the Tantric theories on the importance of the female sexual fluids, which Grant calls kalas. Grant describes the kalas as psycho-sexual secretions of the Tantric suvasini, and goes on to state that there are 16 different kalas that practitioners of sexual magic deal with and that these form the bases, together with the male fluids, of the Elixir. The kalas refers in the Tantras 'specifically to the vaginal vibrations brought on by an intensification of ritual procedure during the performance of the Kaula rites'. (16) As mentioned, Grant dismissed anal sexual practices as pertaining to the Eleventh degree, and instead attributed the Eleventh degree to sexual magic in connection with menstruation, in which woman is connected to the twenty-eight day lunar cycle:

The sun and the moon are the basis of these 16 emanations. In the human organism they are the male and the female. Their energization and polarization produce kolas that flow from the female genital outlet at specific stages of the dual lunation which

constitutes the 28 day cycle of the lunar month. (17)

The importance of Tantra and the mysteries of the kalas to Grant's form of sexual magic cannot be overstated. According to Grant, the sole object of his Typhonian Trilogies is in fact 'to present the arcane science of the kalas in terms of the Western Mystery Tradition'. (18) With that, the development of the sexual magic of the Typhonian O.T.O., as expressed in the works of Kenneth Grant, comes full circle with the earliest references to sexual magic published in the Jubilaeums-Ausgabe Der Oriflamme (1912): the Eastern origins of the O.T.O.'s sexual magic hinted at in Der Oriflamme (although these origins must be considered to be spurious) become a fact in the sense that the secret instructions in sexual magic are combined with Tantric teachings. That way, the sexual magic of Kenneth Grant is an illustrative example of Neo-Tantra.

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If you have found this extract interesting, we would recommend Henrik Bogdan's new book: *Western Esotericism and Rituals of Initiation*, SUNY, 2007.

Notes

Gerald Yorke, 'Tantric Hedonism', *The Occult Observer* 3 (1949):178-179.

Kenneth Grant, *Manifesto of the British Branch of the Ordo Templi Orientis* (London, 1948), 1. The manifesto is not dated, but Grant confirmed to the present author that it was circulated around 1948, after he had been acknowledged a IX by Karl J. Germer. Kenneth Grant to Henrik Bogdan, 15 November 2001.

Kenneth Grant to Austin Osman Spare, 18 April 1952, reprinted in Kenneth Grant and Steffi Grant, *Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare* (London: Fulgur 1998), 79.

Grant and Grant, *Zos Speaks!*, 283 n. 92.

Karl Germer to Kenneth Grant, 20 July 1955.

Kenneth Grant to Bill Heidrick, 28 January 1984.

These articles have been collected, together with a few later articles, and published as Kenneth Grant, *At the Feet of the Guru* (London: Starfire, 2006).

For a bibliography of Grant, see Henrik Bogdan, *Kenneth Grant: A Bibliography – from 1948* (Gothenburg: Academia Esoterica Press, 2003).

Kenneth Grant to Bill Heidrick, 28 January 1984.

Grant, *Beyond the Mauve Zone*, 101.

Grant, *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, 49. Incidentally, Kenneth Grant has dedicated this book to David Curwen.

Kenneth Grant to Henrik Bogdan, 24 August 2004

See Kenneth Grant, *Manifesto of New Isis Lodge O.T.O.* (London, 1955) for further information about this lodge. See 'The Pyramid of Power' by Steffi Grant for the New Isis Lodge's degree system together with corresponding esoteric subjects. Significantly, Tantra is here connected to alchemy. Kenneth Grant, *Hecate's Fountain* (London: Skoob Books, 1992), 37. 'The Pyramid of Power' was originally printed in *Key to the*

Pyramid (London, privately printed, 1952) by Kenneth Grant, i.e. three years prior to the formation of New Isis Lodge.

Kenneth Grant, *Outer Gateways* (London: Skoob Books, 1994), 166-81.

Kenneth Grant, *The Ninth Arch* (London: Starfire, 2002), 1-49.

Kenneth Grant, *Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God* (London: Skoob Books, 1992 [1972]), 211-12.

Kenneth Grant, *Outside the Circles of Time* (London: Frederick Muller, 1980), 26. It should be noted that Crowley also experimented with elixirs composed while the female partner was menstruating-the elixir was in this case referred to as Elixir Rubaeus, i.e. Red Elixir-but this form of sexual magic was seen as a variant of the ninth degree.

Kenneth Grant, *Nightside of Eden* (London: Frederick Muller, 1977), 135.

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Beyond our Ken: a review of 'Against the Light: A Nightside Narrative'
by Alan Moore

First published in Joel Biroco's Kaos 14, 2002

"This is a terrible defect in your outlook on life; you cannot be content with the simplicity of reality and fact; you have to go off into a pipe-dream."

Aleister Crowley, writing to Kenneth Grant, February 15, 1945

As fascinating and as ultimately mystifying as a giant squid in a cocktail dress, what shall we make of Kenneth Grant? I know few occultists without at least a passing interest in his work, and I know fewer still who would profess to have the first idea what he is on about. What he is on. To open any Grant text following his relatively lucid *Magical Revival* is to plunge into an information soup, an overwhelming and hallucinatory bouillon of arcane fact, mystic speculation and apparent outright fantasy, as appetising (and as structured) as a dish of Gumbo. The delicious esoteric fragments tumble past in an incessant boil of prose, each morsel having the authentic taste of magic, each entirely disconnected from the morsel which preceded it. Sometimes it seems as if inferior ingredients have been included, from an unreliable source: the occult data and the correspondences that simply fail to check out when investigated, knowledge that appears to have been channelled rather than researched. Doubtful transmissions from the Mauve Zone.

Spicing this delirious broth, characteristically we come across bewildering yet urgent outbursts in which Grant repeatedly protests that the eleventh degree ritual of the OTO involves no homosexual practices, or jaw-dropping accounts of magic workings that defy all credibility, with live baboons dragged screeching into nothingness by extrahuman forces, this delivered casually, almost as after-dinner anecdote. The

onslaught of compulsive weirdness in Grant's work is unrelenting, filled with jumpy fast-cuts that remind one less of text than television: H P Lovecraft's House Party. Each chapter an emetic gush of curdling chthonic biles and juices served up steaming, a hot shrapnel of ideas, intense and indiscriminate. A shotgun full of snails and amethysts discharged point blank into the reader's face.

The difficulty in assessing Kenneth Grant as writer is compounded by his stance as magus which, quite properly, insists upon the personal and the subjective, making it impossible to view his writings without reference to Grant himself, the atmosphere of his peculiar mind hung in a churning fogbank over every page. A mere fifteen, Grant blundered into the fluorescent vortex of Aleister Crowley via a copy of *Magick in Theory and Practice* discovered in a Charing Cross Road bookshop. Three years later, aged eighteen, Grant joined the army "with the expectation of being sent to India, where I had hopes of finding a guru". Given that Grant's enlistment took place at the height of World War II, this statement would seem to suggest a grasp upon conventional worldly reality that was at best precarious. Eighteen months after setting out on his unusual khaki path towards enlightenment, Grant suffered an unspecified "health breakdown" and was discharged from the forces. During convalescence, he wrote to the Jermyn Street address listed in Crowley's *Book of Thoth*, and subsequently entered into first a correspondence and then, later, full apprenticeship with the Great Beast.

Grant, at the time, was barely twenty, while the Master Therion was in his early seventies, a magus down to his last chants and just about to settle into premises at Netherwood in Hastings, Crowley's terminal address. The details of the correspondence and relationship are to be found in Grant's *Remembering Aleister Crowley*, an entrancing blend of fannish scrapbook and *The Screwtape Letters*, published by Skoob Books in 1991. The frequently exasperated tone of Crowley's letters to his younger acolyte suggests a Thelemic Laurel and Hardy routine: Stan fails to magickally identify a channelled drawing of the entity called LAM. In retaliation, Olly knocks Stan's bowler hat off and then treads on it. Stan scratches his head and weeps.

In spite of such one-sided spats between the hapless Grant and his impossibly demanding tutor, Crowley penned a memo during 1946 to the following effect: "Value of Grant: if I die or go to USA, there must be a trained man to take care of the English OTO." This memo is one of the building blocks supporting Grant's succession to the leadership of what is now called the Typhonian OTO, a wilfully chthonic enterprise that seems devoted to exploring Magic's darker countenance; its subterranean underbelly. Clearly, these psychic cave-diving expeditions have done much to generate the slightly creepy, claustrophobic aura that perfumes the reputation of both Grant and his organisation. It's not so much that the Typhonian OTO has "something of the night" about it, more that it gargles with the stuff, splashes it underneath both arms and down its underpants, a schoolboy gone berserk on brimstone aftershave.

Hardly surprising, then, that this relentlessly infernal posture should elicit comment, much of it adverse. As an example, occult writer Gerald Suster has described Grant and his circle as "wallowing in Qlipothic slime", and while this might sound like a perfectly

good Saturday night out to you or I, it seems to be intended as a criticism. Grant, it must be said, does not bend over backwards to contradict this impression. Each new published work contains a further mapping of his inner, magic landscape that exposes more of its bizarre nocturnal landmarks, its unutterable flora and fauna: mauve zones, ninth arches and tunnels of Set; leapers and Outer Gods and elementals in the form of monstrous aquatic owls. The ingress of alien information through the knowledge-gate of the eleventh Sephiroth. Mind parasites. Neural invaders. Great Cthulhu. An apparently deliberate blurring of the line between describing Separate Reality and writing Magic Fiction, if there ever really was a line to blur.

This brings us to *Against the Light*, ostensibly a novel rather than a book of writings about magic, issued in a limited hardback edition of a thousand by Starfire Publishing Ltd. From the word go the novel, if novel it be, adopts an unapologetically ambiguous position. Nowhere on its jacket or within do we find any notice that *Against the Light* is meant to be received as fiction. The only description of its content that we find is in the volume's cryptic subtitle: *A Nightside Narrative*.

The text itself, of course, only confounds the matter further. From the opening dedication to Grant's great-uncle, one Phineas Marsh Black, we are immersed within the question that has surely haunted every reader of Grant's earlier writings: just how much of this is supposed to be... you know... real? The prologue talks of "Uncle Phin" and Grant's great-cousin Gregor, seemingly also a relative of Crowley's and an actual person, his existence at least vouched for elsewhere in Grant's oeuvre of avowed nonfiction. From here we trip lightly through a brief discussion of Clan Grant and an unusual family heirloom in the form of a forbidden book known as Grant's Grimoire, this being a record of the quaint, longstanding family tradition of "traffic with entities not of this world". The author helpfully informs us that "there exists to this day in the library of a Florentine family an Italian version, *Il Grimoire Grantiano*."

Scarcely have we had time to absorb this stylish continental touch than we are introduced to yet another member of Clan Grant, this time an ancestor named Margaret Wyard who, the author gleefully informs us, is alleged to have claimed carnal knowledge of the Devil in a bestial form at UFO hotspot Rendlesham Forest during the sixteenth century. Just as we're starting to appreciate how much fun Christmas family reunions at the Grant place must have been, we're whisked away into the body of a narrative where the first person author and a scryer-for-hire named Margaret Leasing attempt to solve the interlocking mysteries of Margaret Wyard and the grimoire, leading them into the world of shrieking cosmic horror where Grant at least seems to feel most at home, most thoroughly relaxed.

Nothing about the style of Grant's delivery throughout the book distinguishes *Against the Light* from the preceding non-fictional work. The author's voice has the same worryingly straight-faced tone to which the readers have become accustomed, and instead of any novelistic structure we see Grant employ his usual device of sweeping a vast pile of fascinating information up into one place, then chopping it out arbitrarily into a semblance of individual chapters. Characters familiar from Grant's previous work

recur: Crowley himself, along with Austin Osman Spare, Yeld Paterson and Black Eagle, Spare's famous spirit guide. The anecdotes describing ritual events and states are not intrinsically more unbelievable than those to be found in Grant's earlier work, except that here they occupy more space. Presenting his account, the author does not seem less earnest or less anxious to convince than he seems in *Nightside of Eden* or *Outside the Circles of Time*.

Given the above, attempting to critique *Against the Light* by the same terms one would apply to, say, a current horror-fantasy novella would seem both redundant and unfair. Should we then treat the book as an expanded ritual journal, a straightforward piece of magical reportage, only differing from Grant's previous work in its ratio of anecdote to ideology? Again, this presents difficulties, not least being that alongside all the genuine occult celebrities woven into Grant's tale we also find clearly fictitious personages such as Helen Vaughn, half-human heroine of Arthur Machen's work *The Great God Pan*, or Richard Pickman, the doomed artist spirited away by ghouls in H P Lovecraft's *Pickman's Model*. Throw in Sin Sin Wa, an astral Chinaman who seems to be the model for Sax Rohmer's *Fu Manchu*, and one begins to grasp the full dimension of the problem.

Complicating matters is the nature of the narrative itself, with certain passages apparently intended to take place somewhere at least within the vague proximity of ordinary reality, while other parts plunge us into scryed scenes from history or else fullfledged shamanic visions. Furthermore, Grant seldom bothers to make the transition between one state and another absolutely clear and, indeed, seems to see the different planes of narrative as pretty interchangeable. We're dragged, with the narrator, from the glittering hallucinatory bowels of a Lovecraftian underworld, through West End London and into the scrying bowl, often within a page. Adding to the disorienting nature of the tale is the narrator's almost total lack of any recognisable emotional reaction to the Bosch-like apparitions he is constantly confronted by. The literary influence of Lovecraft, obviously a writer much admired by Grant, shows here in the flatness of human characterisation when compared to the vivid and chop-smacking depictions of the narrative's squamous, turns-human horrors.

This lack of emotional response, if we are dealing with an actual account of Grant's experiences rather than fantastic fiction, conveys an absence of affect that turns the landscape of the prose, merely hallucinatory before, into a genuinely psychopathic vista, both obsessive and unsettling. But are we dealing, here, with real experience? If so, real in what sense? Is this a standard horror yarn with an authoritative occult gloss? Is this the fleshed-out record of a ritual working, or a glimpse into the marvellous rubbish left by the collapse of an extraordinary mind? Just what in hell, exactly, are we looking at?

Obviously, the simplest course of action would be to conclude that Grant's work represents no more than funny-coloured bedlam froth, a warning to the rest of us about what happens when you start believing outré things and hang round with Aleister Crowley. This, however, leads us back to our original dilemma: if Grant's opus can be neatly summed up as merely incoherent ravings, why do most occultists that I know,

myself included, have more or less everything that Grant has ever published resting on our shelves? Also, how shall we square a view of Grant as foaming lunatic with the same Kenneth Grant who has contributed so much of worth to the contemporary occult worldview? Without Grant to champion the then-all-but-forgotten works of his friend Austin Osman Spare, the artist would now be remembered as a minor fantasist who sometimes did the odd impressive nude (this was the view advanced in the dismissive, limp obituary notices that Spare's contemporary critics heaped upon him). Without Grant's insistence that the works of H P Lovecraft represented valid channels of magical information, much of the furniture and landscape of our modern magic systems, Chaos magic for example, would be utterly unrecognisable. A sasquatch at a vicarage teaparty, Grant is too big to dismiss, too weird to feel entirely comfortable about. What shall we make of Kenneth Grant?

The answer, if indeed there is an answer, might lie part-concealed within *Against the Light's* seemingly cryptic subtitle, *A Nightside Narrative*. Is this a simple flourish, a mere gothic affectation, or could it be an attempt to provide a label that is both more accurate and more explanatory than plain unvarnished "fiction"?

Let us pause here to consider the essential nature of Grant's contributions to the world of Magic. From his advocacy of the works of Spare and Lovecraft to this latest offering, it's difficult not to perceive a man deeply in love with what Sax Rohmer christened the Romance of Sorcery. This is not to label Grant a fantasist in the pejorative sense: there's a good case to be made for the position that fiction, romance and fantasy have always been the cornerstone of Magic theory. From the first cave-wall surrealism of Palaeolithic shamans, through the visionary poetry of Blake and the vastly important, almost-free-associational synthesis of occult ideas constructed by Eliphas Levi, on to Crowley and Blavatsky, to the Lovecraft/Moorcock tropes of the Chaos magicians, what we see acknowledged is the staggering supernatural power of creative imagination.

Might not the entire of Magic be described as traffic between That Which Is and That Which Is Not; between fact and fiction? If we are to speak of Magic as "The Art", should we not also speak of Art as Magic? Even Crowley tellingly and rather poignantly describes great artists as superior to great magicians. Crowley also points out the connection that exists between a grimoire and a grammar, between casting spells and spelling; goes so far as to admit, at one point, that the greater part of magical activity lies in simply writing about it. Clearly there is a reason why Hermes and Thoth, the Gods of Magic, should be simultaneously the Gods of Writing.

The magician conjures angels or else demons, out of nothingness into manifestation, while the novelist does likewise with her ideas and her characters. Again we have a commerce between the existent and the non-existent, something out of nothingness, the rabbit from an empty hat that is perhaps the very crux of magical endeavour.

The intensely beautiful and elegant schema described by the Qabala, which rests at the fulcrum of Western Occult Tradition, speaks of the ninth, lunar sphere of Yesod as the gate through which all energies from higher stations on the Tree of Life pour down into

material form and manifest existence. Yesod, as the sphere of the unconscious mind, is thus the well from which both the magician and the artist draw. Though situated “higher” than the earthly and material sphere of Malkuth on the Qabalistic diagram, Yesod at the same time represents the underworld of our subconscious and oneiric faculties, the eerie and chthonic realm of Hecate upon which Grant and his Typhoman OTO lavish their magical attention. These are the bone-strewn caves that rest beneath the deepest cellars of Jung’s mansion of the human soul, the dark pits where all dreams and magics spawn. All fictions and insanities born in the queer light of a buried moon: this is the Nightside.

We may read this as the metaphor upon which the subtitle of *Against the Light* depends. The Dayside can perhaps be seen as the consensual outer world of Apollonian thought, empiric reason and the waking mind; the sharp-edged sunlit world of Fact. The Nightside, judged by the same token, then becomes a personal and inner realm of Dionysiac non-sense, fantasy and dream; the shifting moonlit realm of Fiction. In between these two states lies a twilight, intermediary domain: a mauve zone, if you will. This is William Hope Hodgson’s borderland, a troubling grey area in our contract with Reality, the kingdom of the Half-Real, of the swine-things and the shoggoths and the leapers. A blurred spot between the actual and the imaginary. Sometimes things come through. Sometimes, things trade position with their own reflection. Real works of Magic are exposed as fictions. Works of fiction are revealed as Magic. Yelda Paterson winks knowingly at Helen Vaughn and Anna Sprengel. If a witch or sorcerer be of sufficient magnitude and power, the fact that he or she be also fictional should not prove any great impediment.

Viewed in this crepuscular light, the ambiguities that haunt Grant’s book can be resolved. This is not a work of fiction, nor is it authentic Magic documentary. Instead, it is both of those things, shaped by an understanding that the territory of the fantastic is of singular importance to the magus. The subterranean landscape of the Unreal yields a lush, fertile environment, pregnant with possibility, that will sustain both occultist and artist. New life forms erupting from corrosive and impossible conditions, clustering around the boiling mouths of deep sub-oceanic vents or fissures.

It need not be said that this terrain is also highly dangerous: always the risk of being swallowed by one’s own conjured illusions. In *Pellucidar*, the flora and the fauna can be snappish; unpredictable. Tunnels of Set collapse and leave the rescue party, if there is one, listening for voices from the rubble. Or they’ll find you dangling from the Ninth Arch, twisting slowly in the astral breeze, strangled by shadows. Dreamshot. Yellow Brick Road-kill.

Then again, it might be argued that no true, authentic magic insight is achievable without considerable risk. Kenneth Grant’s books, despite or possibly because of their forays into dementia, have more genuine occult power than works produced by more conventionally coherent authors, and are certainly a more engrossing read. The lack of any safety-rail about Grant’s prose is one of its most captivating features. Purple passages that sometimes shift into the ultra-violet. Trains of speculation in spectacular

head-on collision. Thousands dead.

Semantic theory breaks down all communication into two components, noise and signal. Thoth the language god and his pet ape, the gibbering Cynocephalus, the monkey with the typewriter. Order and chaos. Paradoxically, the noise is capable of holding much more information than the signal: a page of Janet and John is more or less entirely signal and contains a minimum of information, while a page of Joyce's *Ulysses* is almost wholly noise and therefore holds a massive quantity of coded data. So with Kenneth Grant, the constant flood of ideas that elude the reader's comprehension and yet are suffused with a greater potential, with a greater potency of meaning than the notions of his more reliable, pedestrian contemporaries. Laudanum as compared with Alcopops. Value of Grant: as paranormal pit-canary and as point-man, Kenneth Grant has been prepared to roll his sleeves up and plunge elbow deep in the "Qlipothic slime" of his imagination, benefiting those of us who'd rather watch from a safe distance. In amongst the vast amount of tentacled and slithering bug-eyed junk he trawls up in his nets there have been pearls of an impressive size and lustre. It is hard to name another single living individual who has done more to shape contemporary western thinking with regard to Magic. If we should dismiss him and his work, on what grounds should we do so? That he's dark? That he's as mad as tits on a piranha? That he's weird? As if the world of the occult was the last place one should expect to find darkness, insanity or weirdness. Rather, we should recognise Grant as a pioneer, if only by the arrows in his back; a fabulous arcane adventurer of an old school that's long since disappeared, if indeed it was ever "really" there; more a successor to John Silence, Simon Iff, Carnacki and the gang than a mere Crowley acolyte.

Against the Light is a rip-roaring arcane text, two-fisted occultism. Read as novel or as magic treatise, it will fail to satisfy, having neither the neat structure of fiction nor the compelling credibility of fact. Read as an incredible chimaeric hybrid of the two, and thus a striking comment on the strange interrelationship between them, it could conversely be seen as a bold, decadent masterpiece, a communiqué from reason's furthest reaches, and beyond. It's to be hoped that the response of the occult book-buying public is sufficient to encourage Starfire Publishing to release any subsequent "Nightside Narratives", granting us further access to Grant's logbook as he presses on with his safari into nightmare. Magic's Mr Kurtz seeking his Heart of Darkness. As a bulletin from that internal, fictive dark, *Against the Light* reminds us that the shadow holds its own form of illumination. Highly recommended for those with an interest in the point where the extremes of magic meet the furthest, most precarious edge of fantasy and fiction. This is Hardcore.

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Fulgur Limited Publishers

Kenneth Grant and the Merovingian Mythos
by Vadge Moore

First published in Dagobert's Revenge, 2001

"Our work is therefore historically authentic; the rediscovery of the Sumerian Tradition."

Aleister Crowley

"Lincoln's researches have undoubtedly illumined certain phases of an ancient myth-cycle intimately associated with the Typhonian Current. They reveal a possible connection between an historic lineage – the Merovingian – and the Typhonian Tradition."

Kenneth Grant

What is this Typhonian Tradition and how is it linked to the Merovingian/Grail Bloodline and the Priory of Sion as described in Michael Baigent, Henry Lincoln and Richard Leigh's book *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail*? According to Kenneth Grant, a leading exponent of this Typhonian Tradition, and head of the Ordo Templi Orientis (a magical organization that was once headed by the one and only Aleister Crowley) this tradition is part of a current of magical force and occult lore dating back to Sumeria and pre-Dynastic Egypt. Originally known as the Draconian Tradition it is a magical current "based on initiated knowledge or gnosis of the Fire Snake." The Fire Snake is also known as the Kundalini or the Ophidian Current; the basis of all true initiation.

merovingianmythosw.jpg

Et in Arcadia Ego, by Nicolas Poussin (1647)

Who is Typhon? According to Mr. Grant, Typhon is "The feminine aspect of Set; sometimes typified as the Mother of Set in her role of Goddess of the Seven Stars, of which Set is the Eighth." Set is the brother of Osiris in the Egyptian Pantheon. Set, Osiris' dark brother, chopped Osiris up into many pieces, leaving him for dead. Set was also the prototype for Satan. Grant writes, "The word Set or Sut, means 'black'. This indicates not only the generative nature of this god but also his association with the night-world, Amenta, for from being a god of the heavens Set fell beneath the horizon and was recognized in later mythologies as the Lord of Hell, the Hidden Land.... This god is of supreme importance in Crowley's Cult, being not only the name of the primal creative spirit but also the formula of sexual magick."

merovingianmythos4a.jpg

Left: "Typhon" (A. Kircher, Oedipus aegyptiacus)

Right: "Typhon" (Le Tarot alchimique)

Set was the "black god". He was known as "he who is below." He was banished to the underworld by his "twin" Horus for killing Osiris. The Nephilim were banished to the center of the earth for disobeying God by mating with the daughters of men and teaching them the "forbidden" arts. In this publication the Nephilim have been identified as the Fathers of the Merovingians. Set was generally considered to be a vile, vicious god baneful to men. But there are enough aspects of this god that link him to the ancient Sumerian myths, the basis of the Merovingian mythos published in this magazine, to show that Set is to be identified with the same gods and characters that make up these Mythos. He may have been considered baneful towards some races, but not the race of the Grail.

In E.A. Wallis Budge's book *The Gods of the Egyptians*, Set is identified as a personification "of the forces of the waters which were supposed to resist light and order. A number of beasts which dwelt in the water, were regarded as symbols of him and of beings wherein he took up his habitation." We will recall that the Merovingian race was sired by a water beast known as the Quinotaur. This Quinotaur took the form of a sea-bull. Crowley's personal seal was of a sea goat. Grant, writing of Crowley's Seal of the Beast, says: "The beast is the sea-goat or amphibious monster identical with Cthulhu, the Quinotaure or Bull of the Deep." Grant writes as a footnote; "The waters under the earth; home of the 'ancestors' or subconscious atavisms of the race." Is this a reference to the race of the Grail?

Grant, writing of the cross of the four corners says; "The intersection of this surface (horizontal and vertical) represent, therefore, the gateway to another dimension, the waters beneath the earth that mirror in their uncertain depths the heights of space above the earth wherein glow the stars, the unborn or un-fleshed souls of future states of consciousness, or simply life beyond earth. The mortal world spreads east and west and the land of le invisibles lies above and below it in the vertical dimensions of height and depths, north and south, Horus and Set." This ties in with *The Book of Enoch* and the Hosts above and the fallen, banished Nephilim below. This also reminds us of the twins or brother gods in Sumeria called Enki and Enlil. Enki, the infernal of the two, represents Set and Enlil represents Horus (although in this context Enlil would also be Osiris). In ancient mythologies names and stories can be switched and one god can also be an attribute of another. It's best to keep this in mind when studying this type of material. Set kills Osiris as Enki kills Enlil. As it has been shown in another article of this publication, Enki is associated with Cain, and Cain was a very bad boy. Enki was an infernal god that has been identified, in this publication, as siring the Merovingian race.

Crowley writes, regarding his Holy Guardian Angel Aiwass, or for want of a better term, his spirit guide; "I now incline to believe that Aiwass is not only the God or Devil once

held holy in Sumer, and mine own Holy Guardian Angel but also a man as I am , insofar as he uses a human body to make His Magickal link with mankind..." Aiwass is the "minister" of Hoor-Paar -Kraat who is another aspect of Set. In Crowley's Book of the Law, Aiwass puts Crowley in touch with the gods now in charge of this planet. This is significant as Crowley describes Aiwass as also manifesting as a man not just a god. This is what we have discovered in this magazine regarding the gods of ancient Sumeria who appeared as gods, men and kings. They seemed to straddle the fence of the divine and mortal worlds. Enki has been associated with Set (in Tracy Twyman's article 'The Merovingian Mythos: Its Symbolic Significance, and it's Roots in the Ancient Kingdom of Atlantis') who is also Satan. It is significant that Crowley identified himself as "The Great Beast 666." In one of Grant's glossaries we read: "Vivo: A corrupt form of OVIZ or Aiwaz, the god worshipped in ancient Sumer and identical with Set or Shaitan."

Grant, writing of the "eye of the void" of a primal African cult says: "This void was known as Elemi, a name which is said to be incommunicable. It was the equivalent of El or Al , continued in the Draconian Cults as El Shaddai or Al Shaitan, the stellar deity worshipped by the Arabs and the Jews and by the earliest settlers in Sumer (in Sumeria the god El is also known as Ia) Alemi or Alhim became the Elohim of biblical lore. These gods or cosmic powers poured through the Veil of the Ain – the all seeing eye – which has its human analogue in the ajna chakra, concentrated in the first power zone-Kether." The Elohim are messengers from on high bringing "knowledge" down for mankind, similar to the Nephilim. They are also associated with Set, or the Chaldean form of Set, Shaitan.

Writing of the Great Old Ones or Elder Gods from Lovecraftian lore, Grant says, "The letter M, the key vibration of the plane of the Elder Gods, is represented mythologically as the sea-goat, Makaru or as the crocodile, the beast of the waters." Couldn't Makaru be a form of Merovee who spawned the Merovingians, and was sired himself from a sea-bull? Tracy Twyman has already written of the connections between Lovecraft's Necronomicon Mythos and the Merovingians in her article 'Dead But Dreaming: The Great Old Ones of Lovecraftian Legend Reinterpreted as Sumerian/Atlantean Kings.'

Now we come to the Qlippoth. The Qlippoth are denizens of the back side of the Tree of Life. This back side or dark side is said to be behind the regular Sephirah of the Qabalah. They are said to be the shells or the husks of the dayside of the Tree. But according to Kenneth Grant they are actually the first, primal manifestation of all things. In terms of Lovcraftian lore they are the Ancient Ones or Great Old Ones of the Necronomicon. They are the first primal void of Nothing before there was something. They have been considered evil by Qabalists and Occultists for centuries only because they represent the terrible blackness of the void and the complete destruction of what we understand as ego, which seems horrific to us. These Qlippoth reside in what is known as the Tunnels of Set. These Tunnels are behind or beneath the Day Side of the Tree of Life as the Nephilim reside beneath the earth. As terrifying as these "beings" may seem, Grant says they are here to enlighten us, as the Nephilim were. Why is the abode of these beings called the Tunnels of Set? Grant writes; "Of Set, because Set is the Seat of the powers manifest as the Tree of Life." This is what is known as the

Typhonian Tradition that Kenneth Grant speaks of.

Let's review: Kenneth Grant believes that he is a part of the Typhonian Tradition or Draconian Tradition which is concerned with the god Set who, like the Nephilim, was banished to live beneath the earth. The Nephilim are believed to have sired the Merovingian Race. Set is a god of the waters and the Merovingian race was sired by a god, the Quinotaur, that also was a beast of the waters. The denizens of the Tunnels of Set, which are behind the Tree of Life, or beneath have been considered "evil" and bestial and are known in the ancient Hebrew texts of the Qabalah as the Qlippoth. The Qlippoth, according to Grant, are actually of benefit to the initiated in order to take them to another level of initiation. Now here is the kicker: according to E.A. Wallis Budge, "Animals with red or reddish brown hair or skins were, and even red haired men were supposed to be especially under the influence of Set." As is well known to anyone reading this publication, the Merovingians were notorious for their red hair and it was believed that this is where they received all of their "powers."

Crowley's design of the Chariot card in his Tarot Deck depicts a Knight (Templar?) holding a disk that represents the Grail. Anyone having read *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* would know that the Templars were Knights pledged to defend the Merovingian/Grail Bloodline. Grant says, in a footnote; "it should be noted that the Graal-Bearer [represented on the Tarot card] is depicted in amber-coloured armor [amber or red, the color associated with the Merovingians]. Amber or Orange appears repeatedly in accounts of UFO sightings." Crowley, in his *Book of Thoth*, writes; "The Charioteer is clothed in the amber-coloured armor appropriate to the sign. He is throned in the chariot rather than conducting it, because the whole system of progression is perfectly balanced. His only function is to bear the Holy Grail." Grant writes, "The bearer of the Graal [Knight Templar?] depicted on Atu VII [the Tarot card] may therefore be identified with the bringer to earth of the Sangraal, or blood royal, the blood which flows in the veins of the Kingly Man extolled by Crowley, although not understood by him in the sense of trans-human Intelligence. Crowley's design for the Graal resembles as closely as may be, for a pre-1947 representation, a shape frequently described in connection with particular types of UFO." Pre-1947 because, as Grant says, that year was the modern explosion of accounts of UFO "sightings" around the world. I am not partial to the literal belief in UFO's. I believe, as Dr. Carl Jung believed, that these UFO sightings are a product of our unconscious veiling of an ancient human experience. Enough said. This "bringing to earth" of the Sangraal by UFO's is the modern day equivalent of the Nephilim, the Outer Ones, or the Elohim earthling "knowledge" and siring a new race of "kingly" beings for this world. Kingly i.e., the Merovingians. The Merovingian blood is the blood of kings, the kings or gods from ancient Sumeria and beyond.

The Plantard family crest is regarded as the key to the Typhonian/Draconian Current, which is the demonic lineage of the Merovingian bloodline. The Typhonian Current refers to the Dragon lineage of Satan. – Image and text from: watch.pair.com

In his book *Outer Gateways* Kenneth Grant writes: "In *The Holy Blood and The Holy*

Grail, the authors reproduce the family crest of Clan Plantard, the contemporary representative of which was, until recently, the Grand Master of the Priore de Sion, an Order which, according to Lincoln, dominated the Order of the Knights Templar and various other highly influential institutions which, at certain periods of history, included the Vatican. The crest which supplies the key to the Current represented by the Merovingian bloodline and the Order of Sion, comprises the symbols of the Typhonian line of descent: the two bears, eleven bees, and the fleur de lys. The motto incorporated in the crest reads 'Et in Arcadia ego.' Arcadia=127, which is the number of the Egyptian Goddess Heqt who was typified by the 'lower part of the back, or haunch.' The two bears denote the Mother (Typhon) and her son (Set). The image of the bee pictorializes the buzzing or humming vibration peculiar to the Outer Ones, or their vehicles. Eleven is the number of Those who are Without, or beyond, the Tree of Life, thus identifying the Outer Ones." The Outer Ones are also the Qliphoth or the Ancient Ones of Lovecraftian lore. That the Typhonian Tradition and the Merovingian Tradition share the same important symbols seems to be much more than a mere coincidence.

In the Typhonian Tradition the Bear is the constellation of Ursa Major. The stars must be aligned in a specific way in order for Set to be properly invoked. To the Priory of Sion (the secret, occult organization dedicated to preserving the Merovingian Bloodline), the Bear was an animal of the Goddess Diana. According to Lynn Picknett and Clive Prince, the authors of *The Templar Revelation*, "...the Merovingian kings, from their founder Merovee to Clovis (who converted to Christianity in 496) were 'pagan kings of the cult of Diana'." Picknett and Prince got this information from the *Dossiers Secrets of the Priory of Sion*. The bees, which are a recurring symbol of the Merovingians are, in the Typhonian Tradition, represented frequently as the humming or buzzing sound that occurs before the appearance of the Great Old Ones or "beings" proper to this tradition. Grant writes "The bee, beetle, or crab, is therefore the link between the earliest manifestation of the Typhonion current and its final phases." Also; "217 is the key number of [Crowley's] *The Book of the Law*. 217 is also the number of DBVRH, meaning 'a bee' which is the specific symbol of Sekhet, whose name means 'a bee.' Sekhet is another aspect of the god Set. There are eleven bees because eleven is the number of Magick and of the sephirah on the Tree of Life, called Daath, which is the "Gateway" to the backside of the Tree and to the Gods. Kenneth Grant's wife Steffi Grant illustrated the cover of her husband's book *Beyond the Mauve Zone* with an image of two bees holding a crystal. As for the fleur-de-lys, in the Typhonian Tradition it represents the 'kingly man' that Crowley extols and the inheritor of the Grail Bloodline. In *The Vision and the Voice*, Crowley is "conversing" with his Holy Guardian Angel Aiwass, who says: "For I am not appointed to guard thee, but we are of the blood royal, the guardians of the Treasure-house of Wisdom": the "blood royal," the Sangraal of the Holy Grail.

Throughout all of Kenneth Grant's books there are references to ideas, archetypes, and images related to the Sumerians, the Merovingians and especially to the mythos that Tracy Twyman has been uncovering in this publication. There are references that I haven't even mentioned. For instance, the bat wings discovered at Rennes le Chateau that in the Typhonian Tradition represent the inversion of the senses that lead to

enlightenment and occult knowledge. I agree with Grant that Henry Lincoln's research has "illuminated certain phases of an ancient myth-cycle intimately associated with the Typhonian Current." It seems that the farther down this road we go, the closer we get to the truth.

Postscript: More on the Bees

"The beehive is found in Masonry as a reminder that in diligence and labor for a common good true happiness and prosperity are found. The bee is a symbol of wisdom, for as this tiny insect collects pollen from the flowers, so men may extract wisdom from the experiences of daily life. The bee is sacred to the goddess Venus and, according to mystics, it is one of several forms of life which came to the earth from the planet Venus millions of years ago. Wheat and bananas are said to be of similar origin. This is the reason why the origin of these three forms of life cannot be traced. The fact that bees are ruled by queens is one reason why this insect is considered a sacred feminine symbol.

In India the god Prana—the personification of the universal life force—is sometimes shown surrounded by a circle of bees. Because of its importance in pollenizing flowers, the bee is the accepted symbol of the generative power. At one time the bee was the emblem of the French kings. The rulers of France wore robes embroidered with bees, and the canopies of their thrones were decorated with gigantic figures of these insects.

The fly symbolizes the tormentor, because of the annoyance it causes to animals. The Chaldean god Baal was often called Baal-Zebul, or the god of the dwelling place. The word zebub, or zabab, means a fly, and Baal-Zebul became Baalzebub, or Beelzebub, a word which was loosely translated to mean Jupiter's fly. The fly was looked upon as a form of the divine power, because of its ability to destroy decaying substances and thus promote health. The fly may have obtained its name Zebub from its peculiar buzzing or humming. Inman believes that Baalzebub, which the Jews ridiculed as My Lord of Flies, really means My Lord Who Hums or Murmurs."

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compiled by Henrik Bogdan

First published by Academia Esoterica Press, 2003

A. Works

A1. The Tree of Life. [Carfax Monographs I] "A Coloured Delineation by Steffi Grant with a Short Note on the Modifications of the One Consciousness." [1959]

Folder with original coloured pen and ink drawing by Steffi Grant. Limited edition of 100 numbered copies. Signed by Steffi Grant. [See A17]

A2. The Golden Dawn. [Carfax Monographs II] "A Brief Note on the Hermetic Order of the G.-. D.-. with a Coloured Delineation of the Complete Symbol of the Rose and Cross by Steffi Grant." [1959]

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A4 - Austin Osman Spare by Kenneth Grant, 1961. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A4. Austin Osman Spare. Carfax Monographs IV "An introduction to his psycho-magical philosophy by Kenneth Grant, illustrated by a formula from the zoetic grimoire of Zos' 1961

Folder with a black and white photograph. Limited edition of 100 numbered copies. Signed by Kenneth Grant. [See A17]

A4a. AOS Una introduzione alla sua filosofia psicomagica

Livorno, Italy: Privately printed, 2000 (Italian trans.)

Limited edition of 100 copies. Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

A5. Vinum Sabbati. Carfax Monographs V "Magical zoomorphisms of the Witches' Sabbath interpreted in the light of ancient symbols by Kenneth Grant." [1961]

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A6. Mage and Image. Carfax Monographs VI "An essay on hermetic mutation with coloured reconstructions of G.-. D.-. wands and sceptres by Steffi Grant." [1961]

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A7. Hidden Lore. Carfax Monographs VII "A survey of recent imaginative writing, with figures from the Hermean zodiac, and the Elemental seals of Dr. Dee. By Kenneth Grant." [1962]

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A8. Yetzirah. Carfax Monographs VIII "Spectral structure and manifest form, with a variant of Frater Achad's Cosmic Snowflake. By Steffi Grant." [1962]
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A9. Magical Creation. Carfax Monographs IX "Aspects of astral perichoresis, with three telesmatic images constructed on G.-. D.-. principles. By Kenneth Grant.' [1963]
Folder with original coloured pen and ink drawing by Steffi Grant. Limited edition of 100 numbered copies. Signed by Kenneth Grant. [See A17]

A9a. Creazione magica "Aspetti della pericoresi astrale con tre immagini telesmatiche costruire sui principi della Golden Dawn' in Primordia No. XX Milano, Marzo 2002 (Italian trans.)
With postcard wrongly attributed to Kenneth instead of Steffi Grant. Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

A10. Vault of the Adepts. Carfax Monographs X "The seven-pointed figure of its ceiling and floor with a study of doctrines enshrined in its symbols. By Kenneth Grant." [1963]
Folder with original coloured pen and ink drawing by Steffi Grant. Limited edition of 100 numbered copies. Signed by Kenneth Grant. [See A17]

A11 - The Magical Revival by Kenneth Grant, 1972. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A11. The Magical Revival, London: Frederick Muller, 1972
244p.p. Illustrated. Black hardback stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dust jacket designed by Steffi Grant. Glossary, bibliography, index.

A11a. The Magical Revival, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1973 (U.S. ed.)
244p.p. Illustrated. Cloth in dust-jacket. Glossary, bibliography, index.

A11b. The Magical Revival, London: Skoob Books, 1991 (reprint)
244p.p. Illustrated. Black hardback stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dust-jacket designed by Steffi Grant. Glossary, bibliography, index. 1p. of errata.

A11c. Il Risveglio della Magia, Rome: Astrolabio-Ubaldini, 1973 (Italian trans.)
199 p.p. Softbound, orange covers with the Mark of the Beast in Black. Translated by Maria Chiara Celletti.

A11d. {-} Tokyo: Kokusho-Kankohkai, 1983 (Japanese trans.)
Red buckram hardback with gilt design inlay.

A11e. Magijski Preporod, Belgrade: Esoteria, 1997 (Serbo-Croat trans.)
234 p.p. Softbound, illustrated covers. Translated by Zivorad Mihajlovic Slavinski.

A11f. Wiederbelebung der Magick. Crowley, Spare, Fortune u. a., Berlin: Verlag Rita

Ruther, 1997 (German trans.)
253 p.p. Softbound, illustrated covers.

A11g. Renascer da Magia. As Bases Metafisicas da Magia Sexual, Sao Paulo: Madras Editora Ltda, 1999 (Portugese trans.)
247 p.p. Softbound, covers illustrated as A11. Translated by Charles Brealatier.

A12 - Aleister Crowley and the Hidden God by Kenneth Grant, 1973. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A12. Aleister Crowley & the Hidden God, London: Frederick Muller, 1973
245 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardback stamped in gold on spine. Pictorial dust jacket designed by Steffi Grant.

A12a. Aleister Crowley & the Hidden God, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1974 (U.S. ed.)
245 p.p. Cloth with pictorial dust jacket.

A12b. Aleister Crowley & the Hidden God, London: Skoob Books, 1992 (reprint)
245 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardback stamped in gold on spine. Pictorial dust jacket design by Steffi Grant. 1 p. of errata.

A12c. Aleister Crowley e il Dio Occulto, Rome: Astrolabio-Ubaldini, 2002, Second edition (Italian trans.)
201 p.p. Softbound, covers illustrated. Translated by Paolo Valli.

A12d. {-} Tokyo: Kokusho-Kankohkai, 1987 (Japanese trans.)
Hardback and slipcase designed by H. R. Giger with a loose green printed paper band wrapped around the slipcase.

A12e. Alister Krouli i Skriveni Bog, Belgrade: Esotheria, 1997 (Serbo-Croat trans.)
344 p.p Softbound, covers illustrated with picture of Aleister Crowley. Translated by Zivorad Mihajlovic Slavinski.

A13. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Muller, 1975
96 p.p. Illustrated. Hardback. Limited to 1000 copies. Pictorial dust jacket collage by Steffi Grant. Oblong quarto.

A13a. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1975 (U.S. ed.)
96 p.p. Illustrated. Hardback. Pictorial dust jacket collage by Steffi Grant. Oblong quarto.

A13b. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, Bootleg Issue, 1989
“Owing to the appearance in 1989 of a mutilated and pirated version of this book, it is necessary to state that the only authentic publication of it, to date is that of Frederick Muller, 1975.’ Outer Gateways [A20] p.29, Note 46. [NO COPY HAS BEEN EXAMINED.]

A13c - Images and Oracles of Austin Osman Spare by Kenneth Grant, 2003. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A13c. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 2003
104 p.p. Standard edition. Illustrated. Hardback. Limited to 500 copies. Pictorial dustjacket collage by Steffi Grant. Landscape 4to.

A13d. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 2003
104 p.p. Standard edition. Illustrated. Paperback. Pictorial dustjacket collage by Steffi Grant. Landscape 4to.

A13e. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 2003
104 p.p. Private edition. Illustrated. Full morocco and slipcase. Limited to 9 copies, signed and numbered by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Pictorial dustjacket collage by Steffi Grant. Landscape 4to.

A13f. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 2003
104 p.p. Special edition (A). Illustrated. Quarter morocco and slipcase. Limited to 93 copies, signed and numbered by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Pictorial dustjacket collage by Steffi Grant. Landscape 4to.

A13g. Images & Oracles of Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 2003
104 p.p. Special edition (B). Illustrated. Cloth. Limited to 31 copies, signed and numbered by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Pictorial dustjacket collage by Steffi Grant. Landscape 4to.

A13h. Immagini e Oracoli di Austin Osman Spare, Privately printed, 2005 (Italian trans.)
93 p.p. Soft covers. Limited edition of 300 numbered copies. Translated by Roberto Migliussi.

A14 - Cults of the Shadow by Kenneth Grant, 1975. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A14. Cults of the Shadow, London: Muller, 1975
244 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design (A) by Steffi Grant.

A14a. Cults of the Shadow, New York: Samuel Weiser, 1976 (U.S. ed.)
244 pp. Illustrated. Black cloth stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design.

A14b. Cults of the Shadow, London: Skoob Books, 1994
244 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design (B) by Steffi Grant.

A14c. Kultovi Senke, Belgrade: Esotheria, 1998 (Serbo-Croat trans.)
265 p.p. Softbound. Translated by Momir Miric.

A15a - Nightside of Eden by Kenneth Grant, 1994. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A15. Nightside of Eden, London: Frederick Muller, 1977
318 p.p. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design by Steffi Grant. Illustrated, 18 plates. [AN UNKNOWN NUMBER OF COPIES HAS THE OTO LAMEN ON JACKET PRINTED UPSIDE DOWN.]

A15a. Nightside of Eden, London: Skoob Books, 1994 (Reprint)
318 p.p. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design by Steffi Grant. Illustrated.

A16 - Outside the Circles of Time by Kenneth Grant, 1980. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited'

A16. Outside the Circles of Time, London: Frederick Muller, 1980
(xii + 316 p.p.) Illustrated. Black hardback stamped in gold on spine. Pictorial dust jacket, design by Steffi Grant. Glossary, bibliography, index.

A17 - Hidden Lore by Kenneth and Steffi Grant, 1989. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A17. Hidden Lore, London: Skoob Books, 1989
55 p.p. Illustrated. Hard bound, dark blue boards, with gold stamping, design by Steffi Grant. Numbered & limited edition of 1000 copies. Large format.
Reprint of Carfax Monographs, First Published in 10 parts 1959-1963. [See A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A10]

[A17a.] Dold Visdom, Goteborg: Academia Esoterica Press. (Swedish trans.)
Translated by Henrik Bogdan. [Forthcoming.]

A18 - Remembering Aleister Crowley by Kenneth Grant, 1991. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A18. Remembering Aleister Crowley, London: Skoob Books, 1991
66 p.p. Illustrated. Black boards with pictorial dust jacket collage by Steffi Grant.
Includes letters from Aleister Crowley.

A18a - Remembering Aleister Crowley, Liber AI Centenary Edition (detail) Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A18a. Remembering Aleister Crowley, London: Skoob Books/Fulgur Limited, 1991/2004
66 p.p. Illustrated. Black boards with pictorial dust jacket collage by Steffi Grant. Special issue for The Book of the Law Centenary. 93 copies of the original edition, signed and numbered by Kenneth Grant with a commemorative limitation statement, mounted sepia photograph of Crowley and a facsimile of his calling card. Issued in a cloth slipcase blind-stamped with the Mark of the Beast.

A19 - Hecate's Fountain by Kenneth Grant, 1992. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A19. Hecate's Fountain, London: Skoob Books, 1992
288 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dust jacket, design by Steffi Grant. With diagram of the eleven power zones of the Tree of Life in relation to the Necronomicon Mythos and Mauve-Zone Magick.

A20 - Outer Gateways by Kenneth Grant, 1994. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A20. Outer Gateways, London: Skoob Books, 1994
264 p.p. Illustrated. Black hardbound stamped in silver on spine. Pictorial dust jacket, design by Steffi Grant.

A21. Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 1998 [vere 1999]. With Steffi Grant.
295 p.p. Illustrated. Standard edition. Black cloth stamped in silver to front and spine. Pictorial dust jacket, collage by Steffi Grant. Includes The Book of Zos vel Thanatos by Austin Osman Spare.

A21 - Zos Speaks! by Kenneth and Steffi Grant, 1999. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A21a. Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 1998 [vere 1999]. With Steffi Grant.
295 p.p. Illustrated. Pictorial dust jacket, collage by Steffi Grant. Nine copies for private distribution bound in black full morocco and slipcase. Contains a talisman for the Zos Kia Cultus. Signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant.

A21b. Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 1998 [vere 1999]. With Steffi Grant.
295 p.p. Illustrated. Pictorial dust jacket, collage by Steffi Grant. Ninety-three copies bound in black quarter morocco and slipcase. Contains a talisman for the Zos Kia Cultus. Signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant.

A21c. Zos Speaks! Encounters with Austin Osman Spare, London: Fulgur Limited, 1998 [vere 1999]. With Steffi Grant.
295 p.p. Illustrated. Pictorial dust jacket, collage by Steffi Grant. Thirty copies bound in black cloth and slipcase. Contains a talisman for the Zos Kia Cultus. Signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant.

A22 - Beyond the Mauve Zone by Kenneth Grant, 1999. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A22. Beyond the Mauve Zone, London: Starfire, 1999
367 p.p. Illustrated. Standard edition. Black cloth stamped in gold on spine. Pictorial dustjacket design by Steffi Grant. Includes photo facsimile of Ms. Liber Pennae

Praenumbra by "Nema."

A22a. Beyond the Mauve Zone, London: Starfire, 1999
367 p.p. Illustrated. De luxe edition. 71 copies bound in quarter goatskin, handmade paper. Numbered and signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Includes photo facsimile of Liber Pennae Praenumbra by "Nema."

A23 - The Ninth Arch by Kenneth Grant, 2002. Photo copyright © Fulgur Limited

A23. The Ninth Arch, London: Starfire, 2002
640 p.p. (xxxvii + 603) Illustrated. Standard edition. 1000 copies bound in black cloth. Pictorial dustjacket design by Steffi Grant. With a colour frontispiece, black and white plates, a "tailpiece" colour plate of the covers of all nine volumes of the Typhonian Trilogies, and four diagrams.

A23a. The Ninth Arch, London: Starfire, 2002
640 p.p. (xxxvii + 603) Illustrated. De luxe edition. 97 copies bound in handmade paper, quarter bound in goatskin with coloured endpapers. Each copy is individually numbered and signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Pictorial dustjacket design by Steffi Grant. With a colour frontispiece, black and white plates, a "tailpiece" colour plate of the covers of all nine volumes of the Typhonian Trilogies, and four diagrams.

A24. At the Feet of the Guru, London: Starfire, 2006
132 p.p. Standard edition. Black in black wiblan, with pictorial dust jacket designed by Steffi Grant. Fourteen black and white plates.

A24a. At the Feet of the Guru, London: Starfire, 2006
132 p.p. Deluxe edition. Limited edition of 97 copies, numbered and signed by Kenneth and Steffi Grant. Bound in Himalayan hand-made paper, with cloth quarter-binding of black Japanese silk. Coloured endpapers, and top and tail bands. With pictorial dustjacket designed by Steffi Grant. Fourteen black and white plates.

B. Poetry
[Forthcoming]

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Michael P. Bertiaux

Michael Bertiaux, 1979. Copyright ©

Michael Bertiaux (b.1935, Seattle), author of the famed Voudon Gnostic Workbook and Hierophant of the Voudon Gnostic Current is a rare visionary in modern occult studies. Raised in a liberal theosophical household, he was drawn to the esoteric and spiritual approach to religion and Being from early on. After studying philosophy in New Orleans and having been ordained as a Deacon in the Anglican Church, Bertiaux was sent to Haiti in 1963 where he taught philosophy and was in charge of the local Anglican museum. It was on "the magic island" that Bertiaux met his spiritus rector, Dr. Jean-Maine, who initiated him into the secrets of the Voudon Gnosis. His close collaboration with Jean-Maine, first in Haiti and then later in Chicago lasted until the Voudon master's death in the early 1980s. Returning from Haiti, Bertiaux found the Anglican clergy suspicious of his close ties with the Voudon sorcerers and slowly both parties drifted apart. With his church career coming to an end he accepted an offer from the Theosophical Society to work and lecture at their Headquarter at Wheaton, Illinois outside Chicago. Soon thereafter Bertiaux changed professions one last time to become a social worker, a career he would pursue until his retirement in the late 1990s. His subsequent move to Chicago would eventually re-unite him with his mentor Dr. Jean-Maine who had been exiled from Haiti in the reign of President Duvalier.

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Bertiaux stands unique in the spiritual world. His system of occultism and gnosis is unlike any other. Instead of reworking the occult past and clinging to classical theories, he works mainly on gnostic-radionic lines and esoteric creativity. Deeply rooted and based in the magical world and traditions of Esoteric Voudon, a very elaborate and specialized form of Voudon taught to Bertiaux by his Haitian master Jean-Maine, Bertiaux has managed to introduce a great number of other spiritual currents into his system and thus empowering it even further. Esoteric Voudon being a highly complex and living tradition, allowed the adepts of the Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua and La Couleuvre Noire headed by Jean-Maine and Bertiaux, to absorb other systems in a true syncretic and universal gnostic fashion. To unite areas so seemingly apart as German Idealism and theosophy, to Shinto and Bon-Po, Bertiaux has spun a metaphysical web connecting and bringing them into occult harmony through the threads and cabalah of Esoteric Voudon. Throughout the papers that form the lessons of the O.T.O.A. and L.C.N., Bertiaux outlines not only a system of occult practice but also a spiritual philosophy through which students may develop a technology applicable to any desired working. The raw energy generated by the elemental sorcery and congress of adepts, spirits and Les Vudu are used to empower the phantastic worlds of esoteric logic, enabling the fiends and fiendesses of the system to completely transform themselves, move outside the circles of time and to enter a state of absolute immortality and infinity.

To aid in this esoteric metamorphosis Bertiaux also stresses the creative aspects of magic and gnosis. In addition to being a writer and philosopher, he has produced many "evocative" works of art, including paintings that have been used as magical instruments and gateways to the spirit world. He has not only greatly influenced contemporary occult circles and individuals such as Kenneth Grant of the Typhonian OTO, the Chaos magick scene and Gnostic circles, but also musicians and artists such as Grant Morrison,

creator of The Invisibles comic series.

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An Encounter with Chicago's Black Magic Theosophic Neo-Pythagorian Gnostic Master
by John Fleming

First published in Neighbourhood News, 1979

Even though Aleister Crowley lived for a while during the 1920s in a studio apartment off Belmont Harbor, and despite the theme of a book published some time ago called *Psychic City: Occult Chicago, Center of the Universe*, Michael Bertiaux isn't overly impressed with the mystical atmosphere around here. "I don't really believe that Chicago is a biomagnetic center," he said the other day. This is bad news for the local gurus who say the city is built above the ruins of ancient Atlantis, but it's probably true, because Bertiaux knows about such things. Not only a veteran time-traveller in "the dimensionless gaps between universes" and "the icy realms of nothingness called Meon," Bertiaux also has a "trans-yuggothian transmission station" set up in his high-rise apartment on South Michigan Avenue; he claims to use it for direct astral communication with "the space adepts, sothyrii, genii, and Voodoo Bon-Pa spirits."

Bertiaux calls himself a Voodoo Gnostic Master, but he doesn't resemble those movie

characters who favor slinky black outfits and elaborate Egyptian fertility bracelets that suggest a certain interest in bondage and domination. Instead, wearing a baggy sport shirt and constantly fussing with his spectacles, he looks like a mild-mannered social worker, which in fact he is. Since 1966 Bertiaux has worked as a caseworker and supervisor at the state social service office in Woodlawn. "Most successful" according to Bertiaux, who 15 years ago left his job in Seattle as minister in an Episcopalian church ("a country club on its knees, a box lunch with religion thrown in for dessert") and went to Haiti for instruction in the Cult of the Black Snakes. After settling in Chicago, he formed the Neo-Pythagorean Gnostic Church. "You might say that I am the bishop for the Chicago area," said Bertiaux, who has about 100 followers across the country with whom he conducts voluminous correspondence. To qualify as one of Bertiaux's correspondents, "You need to have read as much Husserl and Jung as I have, which means everything they ever wrote. You also need to know Wittgenstein and Cassirer, a German who was the 'in' thing when I was coming up in philosophy, and you also need to have read a lot of Hegel." Bertiaux actually sees his followers only occasionally-at the five weekend seminars he holds yearly at the downtown Midland Hotel, and on the expeditions he leads from time to time to a deserted lake in Wisconsin that he considers a "power zone" for "the Deep Ones" whose "point of entry to the earth-plane" lies within the lake.

Bertiaux's style is soothing enough-he speaks softly and hesitates precisely between each sentence-but a little elusive. Over lunch last Sunday he held court at a table in the back of a Greek restaurant on Clark Street with some of his biggest fans-three young men from a small town north of London who stayed in Chicago with him for two weeks this month. Several years ago, after reading about Bertiaux, the Englishmen had begun exchanging letters with him, and now they were here to go through a mysterious and indecipherable series of tests and "Neo-Platonic dialogues." Apparently successful, these tests had ended the day before when the Englishmen were consecrated as the first bishops in the' English chapter of the Gnostic Church in a ceremony conducted by Bertiaux in his living room. Some blurry Polaroid snapshots from the occasion showed them all draped in what was described as "\$10,000 worth of liturgical robes" and wearing miters similar to what the pope puts on for high mass.

"I thought it was insipid," one of the Englishmen was saying at the restaurant. He was talking with Bertiaux about a peculiar service they'd just come from a ceremony of the Holy Transfiguration Eastern Orthodox Parish held in the attic of a three-flat on Southport. The head-shop decorations, the cardboard Christ, the little plastic bottles labeled "Holy Water," and the thick cloud of incense that filled the attic were ridiculous, the Englishman said. "And what about the deacon in cowboy boots and heavy denim." "It could be worse," said Bertiaux, who admires the minister of the tiny church, Father Elias, because of his "dedication and sincerity." Elias recently switched his services to a traditional early morning hour, a move that Bertiaux said was a "sincere" effort to buck "the priorities of the gay community that is, staying in the bars late Saturday night, going to brunch on Sunday, and then, if there's time, maybe getting around to church in the afternoon."

"Sincerity" is a recurrent concern for Bertiaux, who is not exactly wild about a lot of the various occult and mystical groups in Chicago. "There has been an explosion of popular interest in the occult," he said. "But there's also been an implosion. Ten years ago there were six occult businesses in Chicago. Now there's only one. Too many of them went in for tacky gimmicks like card readings, and in the end 75 percent of the businesses that failed were simply massage parlors and fronts for prostitution." With mild scorn, he went on to describe a "pagan cult" that features shaved heads and royal blue garments trimmed with rabbit fur. There are also at least three covens in Chicago, Bertiaux said, and one of them is led by a witch queen called Lady Donna. "We do have a lot of groups who like to run around in long, flowing white robes."

"Let's gather our consciousness together," Bertiaux announced to the table, as he signaled for the check. The new bishops were going back to the apartment, and Bertiaux was heading for the regular Sunday session of the Theosophical Society. He is a vice-president of the organization and often lectures for it as "a public service."

In the downtown Fine Arts Building, on the same hallway as the Meher Baba Information Center ("Don't Worry-Be Happy") and the Jesus Only Youth Society, the "T.S." room is furnished with a grand piano, an American flag, a couple of dusty cabinets filled with books, and several dozen folding chairs. Last Sunday's speaker was Dr. Clarence Rodney, a 90-year-old West Indian who runs a place called the Basilica of Divine Wisdom. "He's mediumistic, clairvoyant, and a psychometrist," said Bertiaux, smiling at Rodney's "porn-porn hat" and floor-length gown. Rodney was an impressively eccentric sight, but among the two dozen people in the audience there were several equally distinctive figures.

"That young man at the front with the beard and long hair wearing a T-shirt is the leader of a group that regards him as a Christ figure," Bertiaux said. "A little Manson-type, a messiah. He used to interrupt meetings here by standing up and saying, 'There's, something powerful happening in the room. Let's all join hands and meditate.' Very extreme, but lately he's toned down, because he's lost so many of his followers."

About five minutes into Rodney's talk on astronauts, angels and ghosts, "weight-lace-ness" and "luminous bodies," there was a commotion at the back of the room. It was the entrance of an old man in a bright lemon yellow, bowler and a dirty, ruffled shirt. Carrying a shopping bag, he had a cigarette protruding from one of his nostrils: "He's supposed to be quite wealthy," Bertiaux whispered, "but very eccentric. An expert on Swedenborg."

"Where does Theosophy stand on the Second Coming?" the man barked at Rodney. But before the doctor could answer, a blowsy old woman stood up, flashed a girlish smile that exposed a row of ruined teeth, and said to the man with the cigarette in his nose, "Please, can't we hold our questions to the topic?"

Walking along Michigan Avenue toward his apartment after the meeting, Bertiaux laughed at a description of the Theosophists as "Jesuits on mescaline." That's right, he

said, "It's a real trip." At home Bertiaux slipped off his shoes and disappeared into another room for a quick nap on his "id sofa." With a terrific view of Lake Michigan, the apartment is a riot of vivid paintings, plants, and mystical paraphernalia. The Englishmen were reading in the living room, and one of them said, "If you nudge Michael a bit, he'll admit to being a black magician."

When he returned Bertiaux was nudged. "Yes," he said, "but black magic is merely a sensational term designed to keep the frivolous away and create barriers. What we're doing here is the very serious matter of studying metaphysics and the occult, and the way that mathematics weaves these elements together in the invisible, unconscious world behind appearances." This is not tremendously original, but what distinguishes Bertiaux is his reliance on the images of science fiction and fantasy-especially from the books of H.P. Lovecraft" to try and communicate what things like computers and radar and radioactivity all mean."

"I've had a few flights of astral projection and out-of-body experiences," Bertiaux said. "It's fourth dimensional mental activity." "That's one of the best descriptions I've ever heard," said one of the Englishmen, as he passed around glasses of Greek wine. Maybe so, but mostly Bertiaux is pretty obscure, especially in discussing the various "psychic machines" scattered around his living room. One is a rectangular box of, polished wood equipped with dials and switches and connected by wires to a series of brightly colored metal panels. It's attractive in a weird sort of way, and perhaps it does represent the "Bergsonian relationship between technology and spirituality," but what does it do? Amazing things, according to Bertiaux, but they're not really explainable in ordinary language. "All forms of art are machines," is the way he puts it, "within a certain context."

Bertiaux is very proud of his education – four years under the Jesuits at Seattle University, and graduate work in philosophy at Tulane and the Divinity School of the University of British Columbia – and he gets especially worked up about what he calls "the logic-choppers" of the academic community. "I don't need an academic position. The important thing is to be a pioneer and to break and smash every intellectual barrier in your way: Like the hotshots from the university theology schools, I lecture on Jung. But I don't look at the Jungian system from the outside. I live inside it."

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An Interview with Michael Bertiaux

by Nevill Drury

First published in The Occult Experience, 1985

High up, on the thirty-third floor of a residential apartment block on South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, lives a Voodoo priest. He is a gently spoken man with intense eyes, heavy-rimmed glasses and a dark, full-bodied beard. By day he works as a government-counsellor, hearing welfare grievances mainly from the Haitian community in the city. In his private time, however, he celebrates the mysteries of Guede and Legbha, the Voodoo counterpart of the dead and risen Christ. Michael Bertiaux is by no means a typical occultist. Indeed it is difficult to say whether – in the traditional sense – he is a black or white magician. He's not really sure himself. Most occultists, he says, resort to techniques at both ends of the spectrum. However he does admit that "life is so complex that we sometimes have to do things to survive that would have been considered, at one time, forms of black magic."

Bertiaux, like many occultists, is a Capricorn, and also has a Neptune ascendant. Born in Seattle on 18 January 1935, he grew up in a family that was primarily Theosophical. His father tended towards Zen Buddhism, while his mother was interested in spiritualism and the development of psychic powers. The Bertiaux ancestry was a combination of English, French and Irish.

Michael Bertiaux, Photo copyright ©

Like a number of ceremonial magicians, Bertiaux's career began within the ranks of orthodox religion and then departed for the fringe. Educated initially by Jesuit fathers, he later attended an Anglican seminary in order to train for a career in the Church. He graduated with honours, was ordained, and became curate of an Anglican parish in West Seattle. It was shortly after this that his career took an oblique turn towards the occult.

An opportunity arose for Michael Bertiaux to teach philosophy in the Anglican Church College in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. He decided to go, and as part of his training in 'culture shock' transitions, studied with the distinguished anthropologist Margaret Mead.

The first visit to Haiti was only for three months but some interesting contacts were made. These included traditional Voodoo practitioners with French esoteric leanings who were keen to see their system of Haitian magic adapted for an American audience. They introduced Bertiaux to the key concepts and asked him to help them present the more positive side of Voodoo which, so far, had not been available in the West. Bertiaux was intrigued and promised to stay in touch. He returned to Seattle, maintained contact with the vouduns from Haiti, and began to see that his spiritual path was changing direction. It was becoming increasingly clear to him that he would have to leave the Anglican Church to join the Haitian mystery tradition.

The French occult connection in Haiti derives from two eighteenth-century mystics, Louis Claude de Saint-Martin and Martinez de Pasqually. The latter was a Rosicrucian disciple of Emanuel Swedenborg, and the founder of an occult group called the Order of the Elect Cohens. He was inspired by Gnosticism and the Kabbalah, and believed that

one could only gain spiritual salvation by contacting the Divine Source of All Being, and by participating in an initiation ceremony to invoke one's Holy Guardian Angel. Saint-Martin joined de Pasqually's order in 1768 and after the leader's death in 1774 became the dominant figure in the group. Collectively they became known as Martinists. There were Martinist orders in several different regions of France: in Foix, Bordeaux, Paris and Lyons – and by the end of the eighteenth century, also in Haiti. However here the tradition tended to blend with Voodoo.

After a period in abeyance, Martinism revived in Haiti in the 1890s and between the two world wars the so-called Neo-Pythagorean Gnostic Church came into being. This church advocates the invocation of angels and planetary spirits, is highly ritualistic, and regards the Eucharist as the central initiation. Members of the clergy claim to be clairvoyant, often have visions during the Mass, and speak in a mystical language which – as Michael Bertiaux later explained – is a type of 'Slavonic Voodoo', resembling the Pentacostal speaking-in-tongues.

Dr Jean-Maine

The present head and supreme hierophant of the Gnostic Church in Haiti is Dr Hector Jean- Maine. Born in Haiti and educated in France, Dr Jean-Maine was initiated by a Martinist bishop and now lives in the mountains near Leogane. Michael Bertiaux's role within the Church is to be its representative for all Caucasian-American members. He was formally initiated into the Gnostic-Voodoo mysteries on 15 August 1963.

The following year he resigned from the Anglican Church and moved to Wheaton, Illinois, where he worked as a researcher for the Theosophical Society. This brought him into contact with several prominent Liberal Catholics, including Dr Henry Smith, Bishop Stephan Hoeller and Bishop Gregory, who was also a key figure in the Russian Orthodox Church. Liberal Catholicism maintains a high degree of ceremonial, and appeals to many mystically inclined Theosophists. Its influence has left its mark on Bertiaux to the extent that in his ceremonial workings he could easily be mistaken for an Eastern Orthodox priest. However it becomes apparent that the forces he is invoking lie well outside the range of mainstream Christian beliefs.

In the late 1960s Michael Bertiaux began to swing back more heavily into the Voodoo tradition. Several Haitian vouduns had moved to suburban Evanston – there was a sizeable Haitian community in Chicago at that time – and Bertiaux was consecrated as an adept within an organization known as the Monastery of the Seven Rays. Bertiaux considers this occult order to be the 'magical offshoot of Roman Catholicism' although it is rather less likely that the Vatican would consider it so.

Certainly, the role of the dead and risen Christ remains central to the cosmology, but the spiritual atmosphere is quite different from that in Christianity. There is a strong input from Voodoo – a central magical technique is to transform one's consciousness into that of an 'astral tarantula', and one's occult powers are obtained from Voodoo spirits of possession known as loas. A far cry, indeed, from the orthodox scriptures. The

Monastery's cosmology – or map of higher consciousness – resembles the Kabbalistic Tree of Life except that the Hebrew god-names are replaced by their Voodoo counterparts. In Bertiaux's magical ceremonies – which feature monotone chanting, specific ritual gestures made with the fingers, and the extensive use of implements like the censer, bell and magic crystal – most of the real work is done on the inner planes. The key to working magic, says Bertiaux, is the development of powers of visualization.

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On the walls of Bertiaux's apartment hang numerous oil paintings of Voodoo gods, and these are used as an aid to stimulate the imagination, to summon the Spirit from what he calls the "ocean of the unconscious". Among these works, which Bertiaux painted himself in a primitive, atavistic Haitian style, are representations of the Voodoo witch-goddess Maconda, "a powerful and stabilizing influence in ritual"; the Voodoo god of lakes and rivers, who confers telepathy on his devotees; and the crucified Guede, god of the dead. The latter, says Bertiaux, is associated with Christ as the resurrected saviour, but also demonstrates that "while the body may die, the spirit comes back many times, taking on a physical embodiment and resurrecting itself continuously through a cycle of reincarnations..." But it is Bertiaux's concept of the astral tarantula and the idea of the temple as a magical space-ship that are the most extraordinary of all.

One of the techniques advocated in the Monastery of the Seven Rays is to visualize oneself surrounded by creatures so horrible that they ward off magical attacks from the hostile possessing entities of inner space. As the magician energizes himself in ritual, or during his meditations at night, he begins to attract what Bertiaux calls "negative vampires" – the spirits of the dead. It is vital, he says, that one should appear strong and impregnable on the astral planes – and it is for this reason that he has to imaginatively extend the magical circle in his temple into a strong psychic sphere, guarded at the eight points by different Voodoo loas. Meanwhile the magician transforms in the astral imagination into a were-tarantula and prepares to direct his space-ship to different regions of the inner cosmic terrain. As a "spider-sorcerer" or "spider-magician", writes Bertiaux in one of his order papers, "you have woven your web by meeting with your own magical force each of the eight sources of cosmic energy. Thus, cosmic energy is met by god-energy..."

Bertiaux explains this further within the broad context of Voodoo ritual: "Every time we do a ceremony we participate somehow in the god consciousness, or the energy behind the ceremony. I think it is a form of possession without a doubt, and represents the way in which the gods manifest themselves in human experience..."

"Voodoo and Gnosticism both work with the number eight because it is a significant power zone. In Voodoo it is represented by the mystical symbolism of the spider of space, the space deity. It represents the way in which the mind of the priest makes contact with all the possibilities of the world of space and time. For the magician to achieve a certain state of power he becomes that being in order 'to mediumistically

receive the powers from the god behind the animal form.”

So how does the temple actually become a “space-ship” and how does the spider-magician function within it? “The Temple is a space-ship because it is a way of moving through the different spaces of consciousness. In fact the gestures of the ritual are designed to build a spherical vehicle for the priest’s activities in other worlds. The priest is a spider because what he is doing is actually bringing into his own life the experience of other worlds, and then he’s joining himself through the web of his consciousness, to all the different parts of the spiritual experience.

“Every time he does something – a gesture, a word, a movement with some object – he is, in a sense, making contact between his web and something outside it. What he is doing is connecting himself to those worlds and dimensions.”

However, in the particular forms of Voodoo practised by members of the Monastery, there is also something of a magical trade-off. As the order papers make clear, some spirit-entities are allowed to penetrate the protective web and draw on the magician’s life-force in return for providing specific occult powers that are desired. Summoned as the magician arouses himself erotically, the spirits ‘come down upon his body’ draining the vitality of the mind and replacing it with psychic power. It is a method fraught with dangers for it is the very epitome of spirit-possession and leaves the occultist – at the moment of mental surrender – open to all manner of occult forces. As Bertiaux warns his students: “Does this occult exchange provide sufficient compensation for the man who must sacrifice himself to nocturnal appetites of the most perverse type?”

Presumably, in his own case, the risks have proven worthwhile. Also known to order members as Michael Aquarius, Bertiaux is now one of the chief adepts of the Monastery of the Seven Rays and has been largely responsible for disseminating its mysteries by mail to correspondents around the world. And although Voodoo magic clearly has its dark side, Bertiaux believes that a substantial part of what he does ritually has a positive side too. The invocation performed before us in the temple is intended he says, “to distribute force.” It is “a healing intended generally for the whole face of the earth, for all humanity, and for all those beings in need of some kind of spiritual strength.”

‘What we are doing in our rituals is describing what is going on in the spiritual world,’ – portraying and summoning the spirits through gestures, magical implements and ceremonial regalia.

There is no doubt that in his dramatic red and gold robe Michael Bertiaux presents an imposing form. Seated on a chair beside his paintings of Voodoo spirits, he has a regal air – a high priest serving exotic gods before an even stranger altar. Yet it is this sense of ceremonial grandeur which makes one pause and take stock, just for a moment. Many storeys below us, in the streets of Chicago, up-tight taxi drivers and frenzied commuters bustle about their daily routines unaware that strange spirits move among them.

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Arts and the Occult: An Interview with Michael Bertiaux
by Bjarne Salling Pedersen

First published online by the Neo Luciferian Church

Author and occultist Michael P. Bertiaux (born 1935) is an influential character in the revival of western magical tradition that began in the late 1960s. In this interview he discusses the connection between occultism and art, his views on several occult societies and the attraction of Voodoo in the western world.

Docteur Bacalou Baca

Michael Bertiaux, a modern day explorer of the occult, was born in 1935. Raised in a Theosophical household he's been influenced by the esoteric approach to religion since his youth. In 1963 Michael Bertiaux got acquainted with Voodoo Docteur Jean-Maine during a stay in Haiti that year. Returning to the USA his studies with Docteur Jean-Maine continued until 1975. Michael Bertiaux is the author of Lucky Hoodoo – A Short Course in Voodoo Power Secrets (1977), which he gave out under the pseudonym Docteur Bacalou Baca. The book is a course in magical techniques to gain money, love, good luck and progress. The core teaching forms the basis for his Voudon Gnostic Workbook (1988), a much prized collector's item today. Michael Bertiaux has been connected with various occult and esoteric organizations during the last four decades. Some of the orders include Ordo Templi Orientis Antiqua (O.T.O.A.) and Fraternitas Saturni, at one time associated with the occult currents of English magician and Golden Dawn member Aleister Crowley. Bertiaux is also associated with Monastery of the Seven Rays and La Couleuvre Noire (The Black Serpent), both orders associated with Voodoo technique. Drawing heavily on French sources, he's also a Martinist and a leader of the Ecclesia Gnostica Spiritualis, a gnostic church of French spiritist origin. The latter years Bertiaux has been relatively silent. He's recently retired to focus on his writing.¹

"Well, I'm happy to be still on the planet," says Bertiaux. "I think the important thing is that I am quite focused on my areas of interest, which I first outlined in my Monastery of the Seven Rays papers. I think I have always been indebted to the Haitian spiritist tradition. I have always been indebted to things that have come out of that tradition and I've always preferred to stay within those boundaries. But that would also include art because so many of the Haitian occultists were painters."

“Many Haitians, little known, express their ideas through art, simply because so many of the ideas couldn’t be expressed in words only. There was such a problem of what type of energy they were speaking of; how could it be communicated? Sometimes it could only be communicated with colors like abstract expressionism.”

Q. Why is Haitian art so powerful and why are artists so special?

“I think it is a high form of expressionism. I think they portray energies in a way that the abstract expressionists (1940s-1960s) in America and Europe haven’t succeeded in objectifying. And I think in many ways that Haitian art is similar to many of the paintings of Crowley, because they use colors expressive. Very, very strong and large amounts of colors to emphasize the dramatization and actualization of powers and force-fields.”

Bertiaux’s apartment is filled with works of art, many of them being his own, but several are gifts from pupils and magical students. A greater part of Bertiaux’s own paintings are colorful expressions of the spirit world.

“I think what’s so important in Haitian esotericism is that everything can be represented in some kind of art,” Bertiaux explains. “If it can’t, I really believe it is only a matter of concept. A lot of Haitian art comes out of the Voodoo religion, but if you look closely you’ll find that it goes beyond the religious perspective. They’re going into the occult science behind the Voodoo. They are taking a voyage into the spirit-painting.”

Q. What do you mean?

“They’re not only artists. They are meta-physicists. I think that what they wanted to do was to talk about how spirits work. In Voodoo there is so much passive petitioning of the gods. It’s a very pious religion. In fact, it is in many ways a religion of fear of the spirits, but once you admit the factor of possession,” says Bertiaux, “you actually have the individual being possessed by a god, which is an infinite personal experience – of cosmic cause – for they’re sharing the same consciousness. Then you overcome this feeling of petitioning and move towards a kind of pure identity where you understand the mind of the god, as if you were the god, or possessing the mind of the god for a moment. I think much of esoteric Voodoo has to do with understanding the mind of the gods, from within. I concur that possessions are facts and an accomplishment. I think that in terms of their mystical way of living – they see Voodoo not as much as a religion, but rather as an environment; a psychic occult environment in which they live. Everything about it is sanctioned by gods. It is a religious universe of mysteries possessing humans or initiates.”

Art and the Occult

Michael Bertiaux’s interest in art as an occult form of expressionism, he explains very specifically.

“I think art is one way in which magical symbols and images can be presented to the public in a way that will not appear threatening. We know from the history of art in the

past 100 years, that many genuine schools of occultism came forth to present themselves as what I am going to call mystical schools of painting, of sculpture and so forth.”

“I am particularly concerned about one French school, says Bertiaux. It is the pataphysical school. It was allied to Dada, surrealism, spiritualism and trance medium ship. The whole idea was that we would explore structures of the unconscious and come back renewed with a new kind of imagery and energy we can focus through works of art. The pataphysicians are my favorites, because what they sought to do was to create a kind of alternative science. I remember a pataphysician telling me, that as metaphysics is to physics, so pataphysics is to metaphysics, which meant an intuitive extension into the abstract or the transcendental or the less known aspects of experience.”

Q. What were the characteristics of this school?

“One of the characteristics would be their drawing of inspiration from dream states and a kind of somnambulistic meditation, says Bertiaux. Another would be the idea that everything has a psychic history. This is related to “the cult of the found object” in modern art, the discovery of “the given.””

“We know that there are many artists who will go around looking for what they call “a found object” – actually they wouldn’t have to look very hard. According to the theory a found object would “speak” to them and indicate to them that this was what was needed for the artwork of the artist.”

“The famous American sculptress Louise Nevelson – who worked with large assemblages and collages made from wood and wooden pieces – she had what I call her esoteric school,” Bertiaux explains. “These helpers of Louise Nevelson would get up very early in the morning. She lived in a town house in Manhattan, I believe; and they would go up and down the alleys, looking for discards. They were all kinds of individuals who were perhaps misfits in the outer world, but she believed them to be tremendously psychic. They all worked for her as her technicians, her helpers, in finding objects and wrapping them up in newspapers and paper bags, bringing them home; and then when they had all these treasures before them, they would let the objects tell them where to use them. And this came from a kind of psychic dialogue with the found object – which, I might add, was very similar to what Carl Jung taught many of his patients, to engage in with many natural things in their own experience. I myself, have developed a kind of found object-obsession with cardboard, as you can see. I don’t like to throw out pieces of cardboard that can be used as works of art!”

Several of Michael Bertiaux’s works are shaped out of cardboard and painted. He’s working on a series of what he calls Golem figures intended as guardians of the magical circle, of the esoteric space of exploration. “I will only throw out a piece of cardboard if it tells me to,” laughs Michael Bertiaux.

Lost and Found

Michael Bertiaux's apartment is decorated with numerous small statues, photos of relatives, magical items, huge plants, books and art in an endless symbolism that leaves the impression of a mixture between an art studio and a well-arranged temple. Michael Bertiaux explains:

"I think one of the important things about found objects and the occult is that the found object was a way of making magical art more and more dynamic, by infusing more and more mental and psychic concentration – and force the creativity of the artist – into the very fabric of the subject matter."

"And it's had a tremendous focus in a variety of spin-off types of art where found objects are now sometimes arranged in magical spaces which are defined by old wooden boxes which people find, and they create a magical universe in which the found objects or the objects from the individuals past that are re-found after many years of being lost, are placed "to live". They're re-found and placed into the space to convey a kind of psychic memory; but to also take on a new life and growth."

"Now many individuals would say: Is it possible for us to truly share the vision of the artist – to engage in this kind of pataphysical creativity? I think so. My own emphasis is that the pataphysicians, like metaphysicians, open things up in a very wonderful way for discovery and sharing on the part of any number of people who have always had some kind of psychic link with these objects. And in a sense, what you're doing with the found object – you've created the found object work of art and it has your own personal momentum in it – is that you place it out there and you use it for attracting the psyche or the principles of individuals to that same area of consciousness. And they see in it something they will recognize; from a kind of psychic recollection that they practice when they approach the found object."

Q. Can this be compared to the magical techniques of Pascal Beverly Randolph (1825-1875), who suggested mixing bodily fluids with paint to bind a spirit to a painting?

"I think so," says Michael Bertiaux. "I think he created artificial elementals. Definitely. Now, there's some questions as to whether or not the elementals in the works of art, are natural or simply they are re-arrangements of the energy. I think they are both. I have always believed that magic, rather than being a level of interpretation, and a kind of conceptualization of the subject matter, is that which gives it another direction and I will say therefore that it makes it become a new type of being also."²

Q. Do you think the same influence could occur in a mass-produced form of art, such as posters that decorates the apartments of many people?

"I think so and I'll tell you why. I think anything is a break through into the spirit world or the continuum of the psychic experience. I think that if you buy something, like one of the millions of copies of Monet's paintings of a garden, that's fine. It is still a doorway into the realm of nature spirits associated with Monet and with the art of his period. You

have to understand that when he recreates them, he interprets them. So he constructs them in a different way than they're given; but by so doing, he places them psychically in a new garden.

The Obsession of Collecting

Michael Bertiaux explains the different items in his apartment as a source of inspiration and power. I asked him about the human obsession of collecting all sorts of things from stamps to stone.

Q. Where do you think it stems from?

"I think it is because we're mammals or animals. I once noticed that various animals, especially our domestic animals – cats especially – collect all kinds of little things. They have little objects they stash away for various purposes. I think it is because of the animal instinct." Michael smiles and adds "I think it's very sad that socialism has made humans too angelic, because if we were more like animals we'd be more capitalistic," he laughs; "but socialism is a caring mother who protects and makes safe her children."

"When I was in Japan I was associated with a lot of Japanese artists. They told me that art in Japan is really based on extreme individualism, which is very different from Japanese tradition where everybody acts in the same way in a group. So an artist has to set his own life apart from everybody else's. And while he may cooperate with other artists, he's really not part of a general class of people, who are tied into a different kind of psychic experience. The less egotistical life of family and groups."

"However, what is always part of pataphysical vision is that individual reading and seeing of your energy field as your own unique vision; otherwise you're not satisfied with what you have produced. I think it is important for the artist to achieve a certain amount of satisfaction in order to motivate himself to continue, to actualize his universe."³

"I would say that the artistic rays of the pataphysical philosophy have permeated many avenues of modern creativity. Many writers who have abandoned traditional methods are using pataphysical inspiration for how they express their creative matter; and many modern musical compositions we know are inspired by pataphysical and radical innovation and a departure from a conventional straight-jacketing of their creative energies."

Satanic Inspiration

During our talks we came to talk of the different occult groups in the western world and we entered into the field of satanic artwork.

"I think it is therapeutic," says Bertiaux. "I think many people were brainwashed with a lot of negativity. I think the school of Felicien Rops broke through that says he. The school of Rops, founded by the same artist in Paris in 1888 was the nucleus in modern Satanism. Some members later left the school of Rops to start the more theistic

organization Temple of Boullan, headed by Paul Micha'l Guzotte, a Haitian esotericist."

"I do not really think that their viewpoint is true in the same sense that the viewpoint of the Church of England is true," he says smiling. "But what I do like is that they do a lot more art-astherapy than the Church of England. And another thing is that I think a lot of the modern psychotherapists – I'm talking about Wilhelm Reich and even J.P. Santae – a lot of their ideas are reflected into an awareness of satanic art. Now if we want to talk about the Temple of Boullan and Satanic art as options for spiritually minded individuals, I think they're very exciting."

Q. In which way?

"I think they're exciting because they're very challenging and they cause individuals to wanting to be creative in a different and new way. Many individuals became artists as a result of this impulse, called "Luciferianism.""

"I don't think that rebellion is necessarily harmful to all individuals. I think what they do, is that they challenge ideas and open doorways faster. I think that for example the school of Rops is more creative than the Russian Orthodox Church, but the Russian Orthodox Church is more beautiful and more powerful in the long run," he adds laughing. "But I still think they can co-exist and each has their work to do," says Michael Bertiaux. "They exist as the right wing and the left wing and balance each other. And I think that the Temple of Boullan is for serious minded individuals who are interested in what we'll call the darker tradition. I personally think that modern esotericism has for the most part been a movement of liberation of individuals from, what I'll call, repressive misconceptions of religion; and especially from protestant or evangelical fundamentalism. But one thing in esotericism that's always been interesting is that there's always been a link with art. I've always seen this as an excellent barometer."

"As I see it, esotericism and Luciferianism – once studied – opens new worlds for the imagination. I am not saying that because you're a Satanist you're going to be a bad person. Most people that are Satanists actually tend to be very depressed because Satanism, like the power of Saturn, tends to be quite heavy – a heavy load or heavy burden. But at the same time it can be terribly illuminating, because individuals have different approaches, and we see new spaces and worlds."

"I think some satanic groups are important as a catalyst to the stifling effect of too much social theology, in Protestantism, says Bertiaux. I think that when an individual is programmed too much by Puritanism it is very sad. I remember hearing a story when I was a child: There was this little boy in our community and he wanted to be an artist. His parents said no, we want you to only read the Bible and not to paint. Painting will get you too close to demons. Well, the kid was of course very frustrated. When he was old enough he ran away from home and lived in a kind of hippie-like commune in California and broke out of his puritan and fundamentalist evangelical conditioning. He ran off and lived on the coast in a cave and produced abstract paintings and sold them at a truck stop for his food; but he was happy about it. He said that he was happier than

he'd ever been before."

Voodoo, New Aeon and Alchemy

Michael Bertiaux, as other magicians, bumped into the works of English occultist, poet and adventurer Aleister Crowley (1875-1947), and the Choronzon Club of C.F. Russell's work. Aleister Crowley's writings had a come back in the 1960ies and new groups surfaced founded on Crowley's new religion of Thelema.⁴

"At one time I was saddened that there was no emphasis on Voodoo, says Bertiaux about this occult network; but I thought of it later as a kind of retirement of energy to return stronger, which it did. And the individuals who were strongly involved with "the slaves" or the Crowleyan idealism, the New Aeon metaphysics, they were just in the order as a magical retirement for the time being, as if they were getting their breath before they went on to their next adventure. So actually nothing destructive or negative happened, to the powers of alchemy and art."

"What is interesting to me is the fact that so many Scandinavian people are attracted to Voodoo through groups like "the slaves"" Bertiaux adds, "long after Dorothy Olsen's passing. Years ago there was a magazine called The Occult Digest in Chicago. They published an essay by Anna Josephine Olofsson. She was a Scandinavian woman who was a medical doctor and she was writing on the topic of whether Voodoo was an occultism. She said that it was. And she started attacking the witch coven in which she was, for being anti-black. Well, I thought this was really quite revolutionary, because you usually do not see these kind of articles, by such diviner of fates and trends."

"Then people in Finland would set up Voodoo altars – and of course the Finns have a shamanic tradition through the Saami people and the Lapps. There's also quite a few interested in Iceland, as well as individuals in the rest of Scandinavia. So I felt that Voodoo was like chocolate – it needed simply to be put in the right package to be irresistible everywhere, as long as it was workable and pro-environmental."

"So what I try to do with my writing is to emphasis to the positive side of positive and negative. Of course I do not shy away from zombies and all the other hidden matters. I might add that the first book I wrote on zombies was a comparison of the zombies to the Golem, the Hebrew cabbalistic concept of the mannequin. I've always felt – I have always, always, always felt, that somehow Hebrew magic and Voodoo have many cognates, as many books have sought to show, e.g. Milo Rigaud, etc.; but found in the Gnostic Brotherhood of Alchemists in California."

"Voodoo is like closet Zionism. Almost"" adds Bertiaux with his usual smile. "It is the vision of the holy kingdom and the holy faith. I'm always amused by the way coincidences amplify life," says Michael Bertiaux. "There was a little girl walking down the street and she saw a book on astrology. She picked it up and looked in it. Then an Irish nun came by and told her that it was Satanism and that she's going to be a prisoner of the demons if she continued reading it. So the girl just put it in her bag and went home. That girl, years later, moved to New York City and she was feeling quite

isolated. Then she saw one of the underground newspapers advertising for a satanic group,” continues Bertiaux. “And she knew how happy she was when she read the book on astrology. She called the number and said she was an astrologer and could she come to the meeting? And they said: Of course, you’re more than welcome. We always welcome newcomers. So she went to the meeting and there she sat down. A young man sat down next to her and eventually they fell in love and became husband and wife. He was also an astrologer. They opened up an astrological service giving tips to stockbrokers and the stock market. Now I use this as an example of whatever is put down rises up. And no matter what it is, it can become positive. Even though it was a satanic gathering she met someone just as herself, and she wasn’t ravished on an altar at the first meeting,” Bertiaux smiles, “as some people would think,⁵ just because she read a book on astrology.”

“You should not pass judgement on things,” adds he. “What you’re doing is creating a mental block – and that’s going to block energy flow. I’m not saying that you should be like a rolling stone and go all over the place, going to meetings after meetings; but I think that what you should do is realize that everything speaks and grows and lives, and again we get back at what I said at the beginning. It is the found object that communicated with the artist, not the object being communicated by the artists mind. So it is with opportunities. They open doorways and energies come to us. After all, Crowley’s wife, Marie-Therese, was “the high-priestess of voudon!” And I’ll close with that!”

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Notes

Michael Bertiaux “sees art as the most efficient way of expressing how occult energies are manifest. Art is really its own Gnosis, and the alliance between art and esotericism is more verifiable today, than a century ago” – Commentary on Interview, from Bertiaux to Pedersen, September 25th, 2003 e.v. back to text

“For pataphysics, if all objects that are found are psychic or ‘alive’ – then all elementals and parts of nature and ‘artificial elementals’, are really natural or parts of ‘the continuum of nature and inquiry’ which must include all aspects of art within its evolution.” – Commentary on Interview, from Bertiaux to Pedersen, September 25th, 2003 e.v. back to text

“In this sense pataphysics is the true child of H. P. Blavatsky’s esoteric system, because she taught the ‘ways of world building’ long before anyone in the west in her ‘transactions’ of the Blavatsky lodge of the T.S.” – Commentary on Interview, from Bertiaux to Pedersen, September 25th, 2003 e.v. back to text

“One such group was the Slaves of Crowley, a surviving tradition of art from Crowley’s sex-magical teaching through his wife Dorothy Olsen.” – Commentary on Interview, Bertiaux to Pedersen, September 25th, 2003 e.v. back to text

“who read certain Irish born authors, who focus on Demonology!” – Commentary on Interview, from Bertiaux to Pedersen, September 25th, 2003 e.v. back to text